1D. GRAND EASTER HOLIDAY NUMBER. 1D.

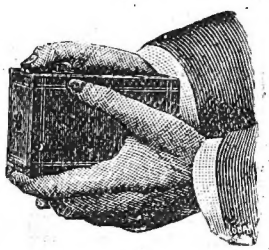
# SHORT STORIES

*The above picture shows Mr. Theodore Racksole and his daughter Nella in the dining-room of a great London hotel. He orders Jules, the waiter—who is secretly engaged in a villainous scheme to kidnap a reigning prince—to bring him a steak and a bottle of Bass. This is against the rules of the hotel, so Jules refuses. It costs Racksole £400,000 to have his own way. The endless complications that ensue are graphically related in "PHANTOM SHADOWS," the new serial that starts within.*

[No. 796. Week Ending April 2nd, 1904.

# BROWNIE KODAKS

**For BOYS and GIRLS.**



**THE No. 1 BROWNIE**

giving Photographs 2½in. x 2½in.
Price 5s. only.

**THE No. 2 BROWNIE**

giving Photographs 3¼in. x 2½in.
Price 10s. only.

Other
FOLDING POCKET KODAKS
from 26s. to £8.

**THE DARK ROOM DISPENSED WITH!**

**KODAK Daylight Developing Machine.**

Develops Films in Daylight—Gaslight—Any Light—Anywhere.

10s. to 45s.

Marvellously Simple and Efficient.

Write for particulars of the GRAND KODAK AMATEUR COMPETITION, £1,000 in Cash Prizes, to Dept. 35.

Of all Photographic Dealers, or of

**KODAK Ltd., 41-43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.**

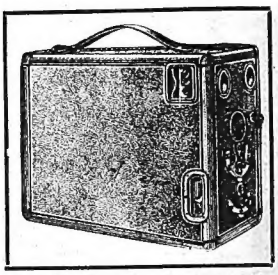
# J. G. GRAVES' CAMERAS.

**The "ASTRAL" Quarter-plate Hand Camera** (as illustrated) for 12 plates (or 24 Films) with Indicator. Achromatic Lens, 4 Diaphragms, F11, F16, F22 and F32, 3 Magnifiers for taking Photos at 3 feet, 6 feet, and 9 feet distance, 2 View Finders, Everset Shutter with Speeds adjustable from one second to one-hundredth of a second, also for Time Exposures.

Sent on receipt of 3/- and your promise to complete the purchase by Six more Monthly Payments of 3/-

**21/-**

Send for Illustrated Catalogue of Photographic Apparatus post free.



AGENTS WANTED. GOOD PAY. NO RESPONSIBILITY. WRITE FOR TERMS

**J. G. GRAVES,**
**169 Division Street, SHEFFIELD.**

# SAPON

**THE IDEAL CLEANSER**

A harmless vegetable compound which dissolves grease so wonderfully that the dirt "drops out" without rubbing and the clothes last longer.

Dissolve the Sapon *thoroughly* in water; put the clothes into the solution and

**SOAK,**
**SQUEEZE,**
**RINSE,**
**WRING.** (That's all.)

Send a post-card to **SAPON LTD.** (Dept. 68), St. Swithin's Chambers, London, for a

**FREE TRIAL PACKET.**

# Kaputine

THE SAFE REMEDY

**CURES IN TEN MINUTES**

**Headache,**
**Neuralgia & all Nerve Pains**

**One dose of Kaputine**, costing 1d., cures in ten minutes the most violent nerve pain, every time.

**Kaputine is not an aperient**, and causes no inconvenience, but is for one purpose only—to cure Nerve Pains.

**Kaputine** goes right to the seat of the trouble—the Nerves—and gives immediate relief.

**Kaputine**, unlike the dangerous white headache powders consisting of one crude drug, is composed of several approved ingredients having the full confidence of the Medical Profession.

**Kaputine is** sold by all Medicine Dealers, Packets of 18 doses, 1/-. Samples 1d. each.

Write now for samples free and post paid to
**C. C. Kaputine, Huddersfield.**




OXFORD 30 3 1904 LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES

No. 796.] Week Ending April 2nd, 1904. [One Penny.

THIS SPLENDID NEW SERIAL STARTS BELOW.

## A Story of Love and Crime.

By ARNOLD BENNETT.

### FIRST CHAPTER.

#### The Millionaire and the Waiter.

"Yes, sir?"

Jules, the celebrated head waiter of the Grand Babylon, was bending formally towards the alert, middle-aged man who had just entered the smoking-room and dropped into a basket-chair in the corner by the conservatory. It was 7.45 on a particularly sultry June night, and dinner was about to be served at the Grand Babylon. Men of all sizes, ages, and nationalities, but every one alike arrayed in faultless evening dress, were dotted about the large, dim apartment. A faint odour of flowers came from the conservatory, and the tinkle of a fountain. The waiters, commanded by Jules, moved softly across the thick Oriental rugs, balancing their trays with the dexterity of jugglers, and receiving and executing orders with that air of profound importance of which only really first-class waiters have the secret. The atmosphere was an atmosphere of serenity and repose, characteristic of the Grand Babylon. It seemed impossible that anything could occur to mar the peaceful, aristocratic monotony of existence in that perfectly-managed establishment. Yet on that night was to happen the mightiest upheaval that the Grand Babylon had ever known.

"Yes, sir?" repeated Jules, and this time there was a shade of august disapproval in his voice; it was not usual for him to have to address a customer twice.

*All rights reserved.*]

"Oh!" said the alert, middle-aged man, looking up at length. Beautifully ignorant of the identity of the great Jules, he allowed his grey eyes to twinkle as he caught sight of the expression on the waiter's face. "Bring me an Angel Kiss."

"Pardon, sir?"

"Bring me an Angel Kiss, and be good enough to lose no time."

"If it's an American drink, I fear we don't keep it, sir." The voice of Jules fell icily distinct, and several men glanced round uneasily, as if to deprecate the slightest disturbance of their calm. The appearance of the person to whom Jules was speaking, however, reassured them somewhat, for he had all the look of that expert, the travelled Englishman, who can differentiate between one hotel and another by instinct, and who knows at once where he may make a fuss with propriety, and where it is advisable to behave exactly as at the club. The Grand Babylon was a hotel in whose smoking-room one behaved as though one was at one's club.

"I didn't suppose you did keep it, but you can mix it, I guess, even in this hotel."

"This isn't an American hotel, sir." The calculated insolence of the words was cleverly masked beneath an accent of humble submission.

The alert, middle-aged man sat up straight, and gazed placidly at Jules, who was pulling his famous red side-whiskers.

"Get a liqueur glass," he said, half curtly and half with good-humoured tolerance, "pour into it equal quantities of maraschino cream and crême de menthe. Don't stir it; don't shake it. Bring it to me. And, I say, tell the bartender——"

Digitized by Google

"Bar-tender, sir?"

"Tell the bar-tender to make a note of the recipe, as I shall probably want an Angel Kiss every evening before dinner so long as this weather lasts."

"I will send the drink to you, sir," said Jules distantly. That was his parting shot, by which he indicated that he was not as other waiters are, and that any person who treated him with disrespect did so at his own peril.

A few minutes later, while the alert, middle-aged man was tasting the Angel Kiss, Jules sat in conclave with Miss Spencer, who had charge of the bureau of the Grand Babylon. This bureau was a fairly large chamber, with two sliding glass partitions which overlooked the hall and the smoking-room.

Only quite a small portion of the clerical work of the great hotel was performed there. The place served chiefly as the lair of Miss Spencer, who was as well known and as important as Jules himself. Most modern hotels have a male clerk to superintend the bureau. But the Grand Babylon went its own way. Miss Spencer had been bureau clerk almost since the Grand Babylon had first raised its massive chimneys to Heaven, and she remained in her place despite the vagaries of other hotels. Always admirably dressed in plain black silk, with a small diamond brooch, immaculate wristbands, and frizzled yellow hair, she looked now just as she had looked an indefinite number of years ago. Her age—none knew it, save herself, and perhaps one other.

The gracious and alluring contours of her figure were irreproachable; and in the evenings she was a useful ornament of which any hotel might be innocently proud. Her knowledge of Bradshaw, of steamship services, and the programmes of theatres and music-halls was unrivalled; yet she never travelled, she never went to a theatre or a music-hall. She seemed to spend the whole of her life in that official lair of hers, imparting information to guests, telephoning to the various departments, or engaged in intimate conversations with her special friends on the staff, as at present.

"Who's Number 107?" Jules asked this black-robed lady.

Miss Spencer examined her ledgers.

"Mr. Theodore Racksole, New York."

"I thought he must be a New Yorker," said Jules, after a brief, significant pause, "but he talks as good English as you or me. Says he wants an 'Angel Kiss'—maraschino and cream, if you please—every night. I'll see he doesn't stop here too long."

Miss Spencer smiled grimly in response. The notion of referring to Theodore Racksole as "a New Yorker" appealed to her sense of humour, a sense in which she was not entirely deficient. She knew, of course, and she knew that Jules knew, that this Theodore Racksole must be the unique and only Theodore Racksole, the third richest man in the United States, and therefore probably in the world. Nevertheless, she ranged herself at once on the side of Jules. Just as there was only one Racksole, so there was only one Jules, and Miss Spencer instinctively shared the latter's indignation at the spectacle of any person whatsoever, millionaire or Emperor, presuming to demand an "Angel Kiss," that unrespectable concoction of maraschino and cream, within the precincts of the Grand Babylon.

Next to the proprietor, there were three gods at the Grand Babylon—Jules, the head waiter, Miss Spencer, and, most powerful of all, Rocco, the renowned chef, who earned two thousand a year, and had a chalet on the Lake of Lucerne. All the great hotels in Northumberland Avenue and on the Thames Embankment had tried to get Rocco away from the Grand Babylon, but without success. Rocco was well aware that even he could rise no higher than the *maître d'hôtel* of the Grand Babylon, which, though it never advertised itself, and didn't belong to a limited company, stood an easy first among the hotels of Europe—first in expensiveness, first in exclusiveness, first in that mysterious quality known as "style."

Situated on the Embankment, the Grand Babylon, despite its noble proportions, was somewhat dwarfed by several colossal neighbours. It had but 350 rooms, whereas there are two hotels within a quarter of a mile with 600 and 400 rooms respectively. On the other hand, the Grand Babylon was the only hotel in London with a genuine separate entrance for Royal visitors constantly in use. The Grand Babylon counted that day wasted on which it did not entertain, at the lowest, a German prince or the Maharajah of some Indian State. When Félix Babylon—after whom, and not with any reference to London's nickname, the hotel was christened—when Félix Babylon founded the hotel in 1869 he had set himself to cater for Royalty, and that was the secret of his triumphant eminence. The son of a rich Swiss hotel proprietor and financier, he had contrived to establish a connection with the officials of several European Courts, and he had not spared money in that respect. Sundry kings and not a few princesses called him Félix, and spoke familiarly of the hotel as "Félix's."

The Grand Babylon was managed accordingly.

The "note" of its policy was discretion, always discretion, and quietude, simplicity, remoteness. The place was like a palace incognito. There was no gold sign over the roof, not even an explanatory word at the entrance. You walked down a small side street off the Strand, you saw a plain brown building in front of you, with two mahogany swing doors, and an official behind each; the doors opened noiselessly; you entered; you were in Félix's. If you meant to be a guest, you, or your courier, gave your card to Miss Spencer. Upon no consideration did you ask for the tariff. It was not good form to mention prices at the Grand Babylon; the prices were enormous, but you never mentioned them. At the conclusion of your stay a bill was presented, brief and void of dry details, and you paid it without a word. You met with a stately civility, that was all. No one had originally asked you to come; no one expressed the hope that you would come again. The Grand Babylon was far above such manœuvres; it defied competition by ignoring it; and consequently was nearly always full during the season.

If there was one thing more than another that annoyed the Grand Babylon—put its back up, so to speak—it was to be compared with, or to be mistaken for, an American hotel. The Grand Babylon was resolutely opposed to American methods of eating, drinking, and lodging—but especially American methods of drinking. The resentment of Jules, on being requested to supply Mr. Theodore Racksole with an Angel Kiss will, therefore, be appreciated.

"Anybody with Mr. Theodore Racksole?" asked Jules, continuing his conversation with Miss Spencer. He put a scornful stress on every syllable of the guest's name.

"Miss Racksole—she's in No. 111."

Jules paused and stroked his left whisker as it lay on his gleaming white collar.

"She's where?" he queried, with a peculiar emphasis.

"No. 111. I couldn't help it. There was no other room with a bath-room and dressing-room on that floor." Miss Spencer's voice had an appealing tone of excuse.

"Why didn't you tell Mr. Theodore Racksole and Miss Racksole that we were unable to accommodate them?"

"Because Babs was within hearing."

Only three people in the wide world ever dreamt of applying to Mr. Félix Babylon the playful but mean abbreviation—Babs; those three were Jules, Miss Spencer, and Rocco. Jules had invented it. No one but he would have had either the wit or the audacity to do so.

"You'd better see that Miss Racksole changes her room to-night," Jules said after another pause. "Leave it to me, I'll fix it. *Au revoir!* It's three minutes to eight. I shall take charge of the dining-room myself to-night." And Jules departed, rubbing his fine white hands slowly and meditatively. It was a trick of his to rub his hands with a strange, roundabout motion, and the action denoted that some unusual excitement was in the air.

At eight o'clock precisely dinner was served in the immense *salle à manger*, that chaste yet splendid apartment of white and gold. At a small table near one of the windows a young lady sat alone. Her frock said Paris, but her face unmistakably said New York. It was a self-possessed and bewitching

Digitized by Google

face, the face of a woman thoroughly accustomed to doing exactly what she liked, when she liked, how she liked; the face of a woman who had taught hundreds of gilded young men the true art of fetching and carrying, and who, by twenty years or so of parental spoiling, had come to regard herself as the feminine equivalent of the Tsar of all the Russias. Such women are only made in America, and they only come to their full bloom in Europe, which they imagine to be a continent created by Providence for their diversion.

The young lady by the window glanced disapprovingly at the menu card. Then she looked round the dining-room, and, while admiring the diners, decided that the room itself was rather small and plain. Then she gazed through the open window, and told herself that though the Thames by twilight was passable enough, it was by no means level with the Hudson, on whose shores her father had a hundred thousand dollar country cottage. Then she returned to the menu, and with a pursing of lovely lips said that there appeared to be nothing to eat.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Nella." It was Mr. Racksole, the intrepid millionaire who had dared to order an Angel Kiss in the smoke-room of the Grand Babylon. Nella—her proper name was Helen—smiled at her parent cautiously, reserving to herself the right to scold if she should feel so inclined.

"You always are late, father," she said.

"Only on a holiday," he added. "What is there to eat?"

"Nothing."

"Then let's have it. I'm hungry. I'm never so hungry as when I'm being seriously idle."

"*Consommé Britannia*," she began to read out from the menu, "*Saumon d'Ecosse, Sauce Génoise, Aspics de Homard.* Oh, Heavens! Who wants these horrid messes on a night like this?"

"But, Nella, this is the best cooking in Europe," he protested.

"Say, father," she said, with seeming irrelevance, "had you forgotten it's my birthday to-morrow?"

"Have I ever forgotten your birthday, Oh most costly daughter?"

"On the whole you've been a most satisfactory dad," she answered sweetly, "and to reward you I'll be content this year with the cheapest birthday treat you ever gave me. Only I'll have it to-night."

"Well," he said, with the long-suffering patience, the readiness for any surprise, of a parent whom Nella had thoroughly trained, "what is it?"

"It's this. Let's have filleted steak and a bottle of Bass for dinner to-night. It will be simply exquisite. I shall love it."

"But, my dear Nella," he exclaimed, "steak and beer at Félix's! It's impossible! Moreover, young women still under twenty-three cannot be permitted to drink Bass."

"I said steak and Bass, and as for being twenty-three, I shall be going in twenty-four to-morrow."

Miss Racksole set her small, white teeth.

There was a gentle cough. Jules stood over them. It must have been out of a pure spirit of adventure that he had selected this table for his own services. Usually Jules did not personally wait at dinner. He merely hovered observant, like a captain on the bridge during the mate's watch. Regular frequenters of the hotel felt themselves honoured when Jules attached himself to their tables.

Theodore Racksole hesitated one second, and then issued the order with a fine air of carelessness:

"Filleted steak for two, and a bottle of Bass." It was the bravest act of Theodore Racksole's life, and yet at more than one previous crisis a high courage had not been lacking to him.

"It's not in the menu, sir," said Jules the imperturbable.

"Never mind. Get it. We want it."

"Very good, sir."

Jules walked to the service-door, and, merely affecting to look behind, came immediately back again.

"Mr. Rocco's compliments, sir, and he regrets to be unable to serve steak and Bass to-night, sir."

"Mr. Rocco?" questioned Racksole lightly.

"Mr. Rocco," repeated Jules with firmness.

"And who is Mr. Rocco?"

"Mr. Rocco is our chef, sir." Jules had the expression of a man who is asked to explain who Shakespeare was.

The two men looked at each other. It seemed incredible that Theodore Racksole, the ineffable Racksole, who owned a thousand miles of railway, several towns, and sixty votes in Congress, should be defied by a waiter, or even by a whole hotel. Yet so it was. When Europe's effete back is against

**"Rocco," said Felix Babylon, "let me introduce Mr. Theodore Racksole, the millionaire, of New York."**

the wall not a regiment of millionaires can turn its flank. Jules had the calm expression of a strong man sure of victory. His face said: "You beat me once, but not this time, my New York friend!"

As for Nella, knowing her father, she foresaw interesting events, and waited confidently for the steak. She did not feel hungry, and she could afford to wait.

"Excuse me a moment, Nella," said Theodore Racksole quietly, "I shall be back in about two seconds," and he strode out of the *salle à manger*. No one in the room recognised the millionaire, for he was unknown to London, this being his first visit to Europe for over twenty years. Had anyone done so, and caught the expression on his face, that man might have

Digitized by Google

trembled for an explosion which should have blown the entire Grand Babylon into the Thames. Jules retired strategically to a corner. He had fired; it was the antagonist's turn. A long and varied experience had taught Jules that a guest who embarks on the subjugation of a waiter is almost always lost; the waiter has so many advantages in such a contest.

## SECOND CHAPTER.

### How Mr. Racksole Obtained his Dinner.

Nevertheless, there are men with a confirmed habit of getting their own way, even as guests in an exclusive hotel: and Theodore Racksole had long since fallen into that useful practice—except where his only daughter Helen, motherless but high-spirited girl, chose to think that his way crossed hers, in which case Theodore capitulated and fell back. But when Theodore and his daughter happened to be going one and the same road, which was pretty often, then Heaven alone might help any obstacle that was so ill-advised as to stand in their path. Jules, great and observant man though he was, had not noticed the terrible projecting chins of both father and daughter, otherwise it is possible he would have reconsidered the question of the steak and Bass.

Theodore Racksole went direct to the entrance-hall of the hotel, and entered Miss Spencer's sanctum.

"I want to see Mr. Babylon," he said, "without the delay of an instant."

Miss Spencer leisurely raised her flaxen head.

"I am afraid——" she began the usual formula. It was part of her daily duty to discourage guests who desired to see Mr. Babylon.

"No, no," said Racksole quickly, "I don't want any 'I'm afraids.' This is business. If you had been the ordinary hotel clerk I should have slipped a couple of sovereigns into your hand, and the thing would have been done. As you are not—as you are obviously above bribes—I merely say to you, I must see Mr. Babylon at once on an affair of the utmost urgency. My name is Racksole—Theodore Racksole."

"Of New York?" questioned a voice at the door, with a slight foreign accent.

The millionaire turned sharply, and saw a rather short, French-looking man, with a bald head, a grey beard, a long and perfectly-built frock-coat, eye-glasses attached to a minute silver chain, and blue eyes that seemed to have the transparent innocence of a maid's.

"There is only one," said Theodore Racksole succinctly.

"You wish to see me?" the new-comer suggested.

"You are Mr. Félix Babylon?"

The man bowed.

"At this moment I wish to see you more than anyone else in the world," said Racksole. "I am consumed and burnt up with a desire to see you, Mr. Babylon. I only want a few minutes' quiet chat. I fancy I can settle my business in that time."

With a gesture Mr. Babylon invited the millionaire down a side corridor, at the end of which was Mr. Babylon's private room, a miracle of Louis XV. furniture and tapestry; like most unmarried men with large incomes, Mr. Babylon had "tastes" of a highly expensive sort.

The landlord and his guest sat down opposite each other. Theodore Racksole had met with the usual millionaire's luck in this adventure, for Mr. Babylon made a practice of not allowing himself to be interviewed by his guests, however distinguished, however wealthy, however pertinacious. If he had not chanced to enter Miss Spencer's office at that precise moment, and if he had not been impressed in a somewhat peculiar way by the physiognomy of the millionaire, not all Mr. Racksole's American energy and ingenuity would have availed for a confabulation with the owner of the Grand Babylon Hotel that night. Theodore Racksole, however, was ignorant that a mere accident had served him. He took all the credit to himself.

"I read in the New York papers some months ago," Theodore started, without even a clearing of the throat, "that this hotel of yours, Mr. Babylon, was to be sold to a limited company, but it appears that the sale was not carried out."

"It was not," answered Mr. Babylon frankly, "and the reason was that the middle-men between the proposed company and myself wished to make a large secret profit, and I declined to be a party to such a profit. They were firm; I was firm; and so the affair came to nothing."

"The agreed price was satisfactory?"

"Quite."

"May I ask what the price was?"

"Are you a buyer, Mr. Racksole?"

"Are you a seller, Mr. Babylon?"

"I am," said Babylon, "on terms. The price was four hundred thousand pounds including the leasehold and goodwill. But I sell only on the condition that the buyer does not transfer the property to a limited company at a higher figure."

"I will put one question to you, Mr. Babylon," said the millionaire. "What have your profits averaged during the last four years?"

"Thirty-four thousand pounds per annum."

"I buy," said Theodore Racksole, smiling contentedly; "and we will, if you please, exchange contract-letters on the spot."

"You come quickly to a resolution, Mr. Racksole. But perhaps you have been considering this question for a long time?"

"On the contrary," Racksole looked at his watch—"I have been considering it for just six minutes."

Félix Babylon bowed, as one thoroughly accustomed to every eccentricity of wealth.

"The beauty of being well-known," Racksole continued, "is that you needn't trouble about preliminary explanations. You, Mr. Babylon, probably know all about me. I know a good deal about you. We can take each other for granted without reference. Really, it is as simple to buy a hotel or a railroad as it is to buy a watch, provided one is equal to the transaction."

"Precisely," agreed Mr. Babylon smiling. "Shall we draw up the little informal contract? There are details to be thought of. But it occurs to me that you cannot have dined yet, and might prefer to deal with minor questions after dinner."

"I have not dined," said the millionaire, with emphasis, "and in that connection will you do me a favour? Will you send for Mr. Rocco?"

"You wish to see him, naturally."

"I do," said the millionaire, and added, "about my dinner."

"Rocco is a great man," murmured Mr. Babylon, as he touched the bell, ignoring the last words. "My compliments to Mr. Rocco," he said to the page who answered his summons, "and if it is quite convenient I should be glad to see him here for a moment."

"What do you give Rocco?" Racksole inquired.

"Two thousand a year and the treatment of an Ambassador."

"I shall give him the treatment of an Ambassador and three thousand."

"You will be wise," said Félix Babylon.

At that moment Rocco came into the room, very softly—a man of forty, thin, with long, thin hands, and an inordinately long, brown, silky moustache.

"Rocco," said Félix Babylon, "let me introduce Mr. Theodore Racksole, of New York."

"Sharmed," said Rocco, bowing. "Ze—ze, vat you call it, millionaire?"

"Exactly," Racksole put in, and continued quickly: "Mr. Rocco, I wish to acquaint you before any other person with the fact that I have purchased the Grand Babylon Hotel. If you think well to afford me the privilege of retaining your services I shall be happy to offer you a remuneration of three thousand a year."

"Tree, you said?"

"Three."

Digitized by Google

"Sharmed."

"And now, Mr. Rocco, will you oblige me very much by ordering a plain beefsteak and a bottle of Bass to be served by Jules—I particularly desire Jules—at table No. 17 in the dining-room, in ten minutes from now? And will you do me the honour of lunching with me to-morrow?"

Mr. Rocco gasped, bowed, muttered something in French, and departed.

Five minutes later the buyer and seller of the Grand Babylon Hotel had each signed a curt document, scribbled out on the hotel note-paper. Félix Babylon asked no questions, and it was this heroic absence of curiosity, of surprise on his part, that more than anything else impressed Theodore Racksole. How many hotel proprietors in the world, Racksole asked himself, would have let that beefsteak and Bass go by without a word of comment?

"From what date do you wish the purchase to take effect?" asked Babylon.

"Oh," said Racksole lightly, "it doesn't matter. Shall we say from to-night?"

"As you will. I have long wished to retire. And now that the moment has come—and so dramatically—I am ready. I shall return to Switzerland. One cannot spend much money there, but it is my native land. I shall be the richest man in Switzerland." He smiled with sad amusement.

"I suppose you *are* fairly well off?" said Racksole, in that easy, familiar style of his, as though the idea had just occurred to him.

"Besides what I shall receive from you, I have half a million invested."

**The above picture illustrates a thrilling episode which is related in a future instalment of "Phantom Shadows."**

"Then you will be nearly a millionaire?"

Félix Babylon nodded.

"I congratulate you, my dear sir," said Racksole, in the tone of a judge addressing a newly-admitted barrister. "Nine hundred thousand pounds or so expressed in francs will sound very nice—in Switzerland."

"Of course to you, Mr. Racksole, such a sum would be poverty. Now if one might guess at your own wealth?" Félix Babylon was imitating the other's freedom.

"I do not know, to five millions or so, what I am worth," said Racksole, with sincerity, his tone indicating that he would have been glad to give the information if it were in his power.

"You have had anxieties, Mr. Racksole?"

"Still have them. I am now holiday-making in London with my daughter in order to get rid of them for a time."

"Is the purchase of hotels your notion of relaxation, then?"

Racksole shrugged his shoulders. "It is a change from railroads," he laughed.

"Ah, my friend, you little know what you have bought."

"Oh! yes I do," returned Racksole; "I have bought just the first hotel in the world."

"That is true, that is true," Babylon admitted, gazing meditatively at the antique Persian carpet. "There is nothing anywhere like my hotel. But you will regret the purchase, Mr. Racksole. It is no business of mine, of course, but I cannot help repeating that you will regret the purchase."

"I never regret."

"Then you will begin very soon—perhaps to-night."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because the Grand Babylon is the Grand Babylon. You think because you control a railroad, or an ironworks, or a line of steamers, therefore you can control anything. But no—not the Grand Babylon. There is something about the Grand Babylon——" He threw up his hands.

"Servants rob you, of course."

"Of course. I suppose I lose a hundred pounds a week in that way. But it is not that I mean. It is the guests. The guests are too—too distinguished. The great Ambassadors, the great financiers, the great nobles, all the men that move the world, put up under my roof. London is the centre of everything, and my hotel—your hotel—is the centre of London. Once I had a King and a Dowager Empress staying here at the same time. Imagine that!"

"A great honour, Mr. Babylon. But wherein lies the difficulty?"

"Mr. Racksole," was the grim reply, "what has become of your shrewdness—that shrewdness which has made your fortune so immense that even you cannot calculate it? Do you not perceive that the roof which habitually shelters all the force, all the authority of the world, must necessarily also shelter nameless and numberless plotters, schemers, evil-doers, and workers of mischief? The thing is as clear as day—and as dark as night. Mr. Racksole, I never know by whom I am surrounded. I never know what is going forward. Only sometimes I get hints, glimpses of strange acts and strange secrets. You mentioned my servants. They are almost all good servants, skilled, competent. But what are they besides? For anything I know my fourth sub-chef may be an agent of some European Government. For anything I know my invaluable Miss Spencer may be in the pay of a court dressmaker or a Frankfort banker. Even Rocco may be someone else in addition to Rocco."

"That makes it all the more interesting," remarked Theodore Racksole.

* * * * *

"What a long time you have been, father," said Nella, when he returned to table No. 17 in the *salle à manger*.

"Only twenty minutes, my dove."

"But you said two seconds. There is a difference."

"Well, you see, I had to wait for the steak to cook."

"Did you have much trouble in getting my birthday treat?"

"No trouble. But it didn't come quite as cheap as you said."

"What do you mean, father?"

"Only that I've bought the entire hotel. But don't split."

Digitized by Google

"Father, you were always a delicious parent. Shall you give me the hotel for a birthday present?"

"No. I shall run it—as an amusement. By the way, who is that chair for?" He noticed that a third cover had been laid at the table.

"That is for a friend of mine who came in about five minutes ago. Of course I told him he must share our steak. He'll be here in a moment."

"May I respectfully inquire his name?"

"Dimmock—Christian name Reginald; profession, English companion to Prince Aribert of Posen. I met him when I was in St. Petersburg with cousin Hetty last autumn. Oh, here he is! Mr. Dimmock, this is my dear father. He has succeeded with the steak."

Theodore Racksole found himself confronted by a very young man, with deep black eyes, and a fresh, boyish expression. They began to talk.

Jules approached with the steak. Racksole tried to catch the waiter's eye, but could not. The dinner proceeded.

"Oh, father!" cried Nella, "what a lot of mustard you have taken!"

"Have I?" he said, and then he happened to glance into a mirror on his left hand between two windows. He saw the reflection of Jules, who stood behind his chair, and he saw Jules give a slow, significant, ominous wink to Mr. Dimmock—Christian name Reginald.

He examined his mustard in silence. He thought that perhaps he had helped himself rather plenteously to mustard.

## THIRD CHAPTER.
### At Three A.M.

Mr. Reginald Dimmock proved himself, despite his extreme youth, to be a man of the world and of experiences, and a practised talker. Conversation between him and Nella Racksole never seemed to flag. They chattered about St. Petersburg, and the ice on the Neva, and the tenor at the opera who had been exiled to Siberia, and the quality of Russian tea, and the sweetness of Russian champagne, and various other aspects of Muscovite existence. Russia exhausted, Nella lightly outlined her own doings since she had met the young man in the Tsar's capital, and this recital brought the topic round to London, where it stayed till the final piece of steak was eaten. Theodore Racksole noticed that Mr. Dimmock gave very meagre information about his own movements, either past or future. He regarded the youth as a typical hanger-on of Courts, and wondered how he had obtained his post of companion to Prince Aribert of Posen, and who Prince Aribert of Posen might be. The millionaire thought he had once heard of Posen, but he wasn't sure; he rather fancied it was one of those small, nondescript German States of which five-sixths of the subjects are Palace officials, and the rest charcoal-burners or innkeepers. Until the meal was nearly over, Racksole said little—perhaps his thoughts were too busy with Jules' wink to Mr. Dimmock; but when ices had been followed by coffee, he decided that it might be as well, in the interests of the hotel, to discover something about his daughter's friend. He never for an instant questioned her right to possess her own friends; he had always left her in the most amazing liberty, relying on her inherited good sense to keep her out of mischief; but, quite apart from the wink, he was struck by Nella's attitude towards Mr. Dimmock, an attitude in which an amiable scorn was blended with an evident desire to propitiate and please.

"Nella tells me, Mr. Dimmock, that you hold a confidential position with Prince Aribert of Posen," said Racksole. "You will pardon an American's ignorance, but is Prince Aribert a reigning Prince—what, I believe, you call in Europe, a Prince Regnant?"

"His Highness is not a reigning Prince, nor ever likely to be," answered Dimmock. "The Grand Ducal Throne of Posen is occupied by his Highness' nephew, the Grand Duke Eugen."

"Nephew?" cried Nella with astonishment.

"Why not, dear lady?"

"But Prince Aribert is surely very young?"

"The Prince, by one of those vagaries of chance which occur sometimes in the history of families, is precisely the same age as the Grand Duke. The late Grand Duke's father was twice married. Hence this youthfulness on the part of an uncle."

"How delicious to be the uncle of someone as old as yourself! But I suppose it is no fun for Prince Aribert. I suppose he has to be frightfully respectful and obedient, and all that, to his nephew?"

"The Grand Duke and my serene master are like brothers. At present, of course, Prince Aribert is nominally heir to the throne, but as no doubt you are aware, the Grand Duke will shortly marry a near relative of the Emperor's, and should there be a family——" Mr. Dimmock stopped and shrugged his straight shoulders. "The Grand Duke," he went on, without finishing the last sentence, "would much prefer Prince Aribert to be his successor. He really doesn't want to marry. Between ourselves, strictly between ourselves, he regards marriage as rather a bore. But, of course, being a German Grand Duke, he is bound to marry. He owes it to his country, to Posen."

"How large is Posen?" asked Racksole bluntly.

"Father," Nella interposed laughing, "you shouldn't ask such inconvenient questions. You ought to have guessed that it isn't etiquette to inquire about the size of a German dukedom."

"I am sure," said Dimmock, with a polite smile, "that the Grand Duke is as much amused as anyone at the size of his territory. I forget the exact acreage, but I remember that once Prince Aribert and myself walked across it and back again in a single day."

"Then the Grand Duke cannot travel very far within his own dominions? You may say that the sun does set on his empire?"

"It does," said Dimmock.

"Unless the weather is cloudy," Nella put in. "Is the Grand Duke content always to stay at home?"

"On the contrary, he is a great traveller, much more so than Prince Aribert. I may tell you what no one knows at present, outside this hotel, that his Royal Highness the Grand Duke, with a small suite, will be here to-morrow"

"In London?" asked Nella.

"Yes."

"In this hotel?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how lovely!"

"That is why your humble servant is here to-night—a sort of advance guard."

"But I understood," Racksole said, "that you were—er—attached to Prince Aribert, the uncle."

"I am. Prince Aribert will also be here. The Grand Duke and the Prince have business about important investments connected with the Grand Duke's marriage settlement. . . In the highest quarters, you understand."

"For so discreet a person," thought Racksole, "you are fairly communicative." Then he said aloud: "Shall we go out on the terrace?"

As they crossed the dining-room Jules stopped Mr. Dimmock and handed him a letter. "Just come, sir, by messenger," said Jules.

Nella dropped behind for a second with her father.

"Leave me alone with this boy a little—there's a dear parent," she whispered in his ear.

"I am a mere cipher, an obedient nobody," Racksole replied, pinching her arm surreptitiously. "Treat me as such. Use me as you like. I will go and look after my hotel." And soon afterwards he disappeared.

Nella and Mr. Dimmock sat together on the terrace sipping iced drinks. They made a handsome couple, bowered amid plants which blossomed at the command of a Chelsea wholesale florist. People who passed by remarked privately that from the look of things there was the beginning of a romance in that conversation. Perhaps there was, but a more intimate acquaintance with the character of Nella Racksole would have

Digitized by Google

been necessary in order to predict what precise form that romance would take.

Jules himself served the liquids, and at ten o'clock he brought another note. Intreating a thousand pardons, Reginald Dimmock, after he had glanced at the note, excused himself on the plea of urgent business for his Serene master, uncle of the Grand Duke of Posen. He asked if he might fetch Mr. Racksole, or escort Miss Racksole to her father. But Miss Racksole said gaily that she felt no need of an escort, and should go to bed. She added that her father and herself always endeavoured to be independent of each other.

Just then Theodore Racksole had found his way once more into Mr. Babylon's private room. Before arriving there, however, he had discovered that in some mysterious manner the news of the change of proprietorship had worked its way down to the lowest strata of the hotel's cosmos. The corridors hummed with it, and even under-servants were to be seen discussing the thing, just as though it mattered to them.

"Have a cigar, Mr. Racksole," said the urbane Mr. Babylon, "and a mouthful of the oldest cognac in all Europe."

*This picture is a reduced facsimile of next week's cover, which will be printed in colours. It illustrates an exciting struggle between Racksole and Jules, which takes place as the immediate outcome of the events which are recorded in the closing paragraphs of this instalment. Next week's "Phantom Shadows" will be splendid.*

In a few minutes these two were talking eagerly and rapidly. Félix Babylon was astonished at Racksole's capacity for absorbing the details of hotel management. And as for Racksole he soon realised that Félix Babylon must be a prince of hotel managers. It had never occurred to Racksole before that to manage a hotel, even a large hotel, could be a specially interesting affair, or that it could make any excessive demands upon the brains of the manager; but he came to see that he had under-rated the possibilities of a hotel. The business of the Grand Babylon was enormous. It took Racksole, with all his genius for organisation, exactly half an hour to master the details of the hotel laundry-work. And the laundry-work was but one branch of activity amid scores, and not a very large one at that. The machinery of checking supplies, and of establishing a mean ratio between the raw stuff received in the kitchen and the number of meals served in the *salle à manger* and the private rooms, was very complicated and delicate. When Racksole had grasped it, he at once suggested some improvements, and this led to a long theoretical discussion, and the discussion led to digressions, and then Félix Babylon, in a moment of absent-mindedness, yawned.

Racksole looked at the gilt clock on the high mantelpiece.

"Great Scott!" he said. "It's three o'clock. Mr. Babylon, accept my apologies for having kept you up to such an absurd hour."

"I have not spent so pleasant an evening for many years. You have let me ride my hobby to my heart's content. It is I who should apologise."

Racksole rose.

"I should like to ask you one question," said Babylon. "Have you ever had anything to do with hotels before?"

"Never," said Racksole.

"Then you have missed your vocation. You could have been the greatest of all hotel-managers. You would have been greater than me, and I am unequalled, though I keep only one hotel, and some men have half a dozen. Mr. Racksole, why have you never run a hotel?"

"Heaven knows," he laughed, "but you flatter me, Mr. Babylon."

"I? Flatter? You do not know me. I flatter no one, except, perhaps, now and then an exceptionally distinguished guest. In which case I give suitable instructions as to the bill."

"Speaking of distinguished guests, I am told that a couple of German princes are coming here to-morrow."

"That is so."

"Does one do anything? Does one receive them formally—stand bowing in the entrance-hall, or anything of that sort?"

Digitized by Google

"Not necessarily. Not unless one wishes. The modern hotel proprietor is not like an inn-keeper of the Middle Ages, and even princes do not expect to see him unless something should happen to go wrong. As a matter of fact, though the Grand Duke of Posen and Prince Aribert have both honoured me by staying here before, I have never even set eyes on them. You will find all arrangements have been made."

They talked a little longer, and then Racksole said good-night.

"Let me see you to your room. The lifts will be closed and the place will be deserted. As for myself, I sleep here," and Mr. Babylon pointed to an inner door.

"No, thanks," said Racksole, "let me explore my own hotel unaccompanied. I believe I can discover my room."

When he got fairly into the passages, Racksole was not so sure that he could discover his own room. The number was 107, but he had forgotten whether it was on the first or second floor. Travelling in a lift, one is unconscious of floors. He passed several lift-doorways, but he could see no glint of a staircase; in all self-respecting hotels staircases have gone out of fashion, and though hotel architects still continue, for old time's sake, to build staircases, they are tucked away in remote corners where their presence is not likely to offend the eye of a spoilt and cosmopolitan public.

The hotel seemed vast, uncanny, deserted. An electric light glowed here and there at long intervals. On the thick carpets, Racksole's thinly-shod feet made no sound, and he wandered at ease to and fro, rather amused, rather struck by the peculiar sense of night and mystery which had suddenly come over him. He fancied he could hear a thousand snores peacefully descending from the upper realms. At length he found a staircase, a very dark and narrow one, and presently he was on the first floor. He soon discovered that the numbers of the rooms on this floor did not get beyond seventy. He encountered another staircase and ascended to the second floor. By the decoration of the walls he recognised this floor as his proper home, and as he strolled through the long corridor he whistled a low, meditative whistle of satisfaction. He thought he heard a step in the transverse corridor, and instinctively he obliterated himself in a recess which held a service-cabinet and a chair. He did hear a step. Peeping cautiously out, he perceived, what he had not perceived previously, that a piece of white ribbon had been tied round the handle of the door of one of the bedrooms. Then a man came round the corner of the transverse corridor, and Racksole drew back. It was Jules—Jules with his hands in his pockets and a slouch hat over his eyes, but in other respects attired as usual.

Racksole, at that instant, remembered with a special vividness what Félix Babylon had said to him at their first interview. He wished he had brought his revolver. He didn't know why he should feel the desirability of a revolver in a London hotel of the most unimpeachable fair fame, but he did feel the desirability of such an instrument of attack and defence. He privately decided that if Jules went past his recess he would take him by the throat and in that attitude put a few plain questions to this highly dubious waiter. But Jules had stopped. The millionaire made another cautious observation. Jules, with infinite gentleness, was turning the handle of the door to which the white ribbon was attached. The door slowly yielded and Jules disappeared within the room. After a brief interval, the night-prowling Jules reappeared, closed the door as softly as he had opened it, removed the ribbon, returned upon his steps, and vanished down the transverse corridor.

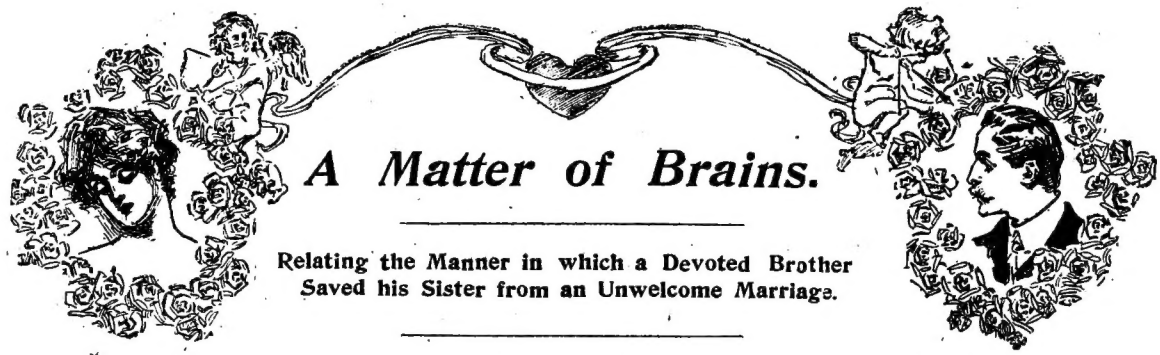
"This is quaint," said Racksole; "quaint to a degree!"

It occurred to him to look at the number of the room, and he stole towards it.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he murmured wonderingly.

The number was 111, his daughter's room! He tried to open it, but the door was locked. Rushing to his own room, No. 107, he seized one of a pair of revolvers (the kind that are made for millionaires) and followed after Jules down the transverse corridor. At the end of this corridor was a window; the window was open, and Jules was innocently gazing out of the window. Ten silent strides, and Theodore Racksole was upon him.

*(Another long instalment of this splendid serial next week.)*



# A Matter of Brains.

**Relating the Manner in which a Devoted Brother Saved his Sister from an Unwelcome Marriage.**

Dolly glanced unconsciously at the hat-rack as he drew on his left glove. There was something different in its appearance, he thought, but he was for a time quite unable to determine what it was. The fact of the matter was, Dolly was not gifted with a superabundance of intellect. He realised the fact for himself. Perhaps it was because he was so frank in acknowledging his deficiency that his friends seldom referred to it. He was a charming companion—when one wished to rest one's tired brain, and he was the kind of fellow you could always borrow money from on the slightest pretext. Therefore he was tolerated, and managed to find an occasional companion at the club. Therefore he was called "Dolly" by everyone, from the steward of the club up, although he detested the name and much preferred the more dignified, even heroic, appellation, "Adolphus," with which he had been christened.

By the time Dolly had reached the forefinger of his left hand in the careful adjustment of his painfully new-looking gloves, his mentality had been worked up to the pitch of reason. He observed that there was a strange cane in the hat rack, precisely like the cane Jack Hazzard carried. This meant that Hazzard had been in the house recently, at least during the afternoon, and, departing, had left his cane. Dolly was a trifle troubled by this. Not on account of the cane—Hazzard could get that at any time—but why should his old schoolfellow, Jack Hazzard, the very man, although a poor young lawyer, Dolly cared for and admired more than any other man in the world, call at the house and not ask for him? They had been in the same class at college. Jack had graduated with honours—Dolly had graduated, in spite of private tutors and Jack's generous coaching, by the back door. But they had been in the same class and they were

Digitized by Google

bosom friends, and Dolly could not understand the matter at all.

Dolly heard a faint sob. He looked up in a frightened manner and listened intently. The sob was repeated, and it was not difficult to tell that it came from the library, and it was less difficult to determine that it was uttered by his sister Laura.

Dolly loved but one woman in the world. The phrase seems trite, inasmuch as it has been repeated by every man to every woman he has made love to. But it was literally true in Dolly's case, as any of the girls who would have contented themselves with his fortunes present and prospective, despite his lack of brains, would have acknowledged. Dolly had no thought for any woman in the world but his sister Laura. Her he worshipped as a superior being to himself.

Dolly walked slowly to the library. There was a horrible fear in his mind that his friend had offended his sister. He could not offer a reasonable explanation for such a state of affairs, so he determined to find out what it was about—and Dolly seldom determined to do anything. He threw open the door of the library and paused. A handsome girl was sitting at a little rosewood desk with her head resting upon her arms. The fugitive end of a lace handkerchief, and an occasional tremor of the slight figure made it very evident to Dolly that he had not been mistaken in supposing that his sister was crying. He walked very gently over to her, and put his ungloved hand on her fluffy golden head. It seemed almost like taking a liberty, for he had never been the romping kind of boy who delights in teasing the other boys of his acquaintance by taking delightful liberties with a pretty sister. He was a little bit afraid, indeed, but he stroked the pretty head once or twice and felt unusually manly.

"By Jove—Lol," he drawled, first adjusting his eyeglass (Dolly could not talk unless his eyeglass was either properly in position or dangling from his hand), "by Jove, I—I——," but Dolly could not think of anything to say. Finally an inspiration came to him.

"I'm awfully sorry, Lol," he drawled again. To his great surprise, far from having the desired effect, this speech precipitated a fresh burst of tears, and the head shook convulsively. Dolly was nonplussed. The only way he knew to please a girl who was offended at anything was to apologise, but Dolly had nothing to apologise for, and could not guess anything. He boldly determined to do something desperate. He knelt down on the floor at her side and put his arm round her. Then he put his mouth close to her shell-like ear, blushing furiously the while, and whispered, still with a drawl:

"Tell a fellah what's the mattah, Lol. We've always been old chums, haven't we, Lol? Tell a fellah—p'waps I can help you, don't you know."

The head shook furiously in the negative. Dolly was discouraged, but he continued:

"I know I am not very smart, and all that—but I'll do all I can—indeed I will, don't you know. Tell me what's the mattah, Lol." In reply to this there was a burst of words, sobs, and little short-drawn breathing from which Dolly managed, by the aid of much and unusual concentration of mind, to gather the fact that his sister considered herself the most miserable girl in the whole world, and that she wished she were dead, and all that sort of thing.

"But you haven't told me why?" continued Dolly.

Laura suddenly sat bolt upright, with an angry look in her eyes, and said, excitedly:

"I don't love him—I don't love him a bit—I detest him, and papa says I must marry him."

Dolly got up and walked slowly back and forth the length of the room. He was a good deal surprised. He liked Jack—he always had. He knew very little about the indications of such things, but it had always seemed to him that Jack was a little sweet on Laura. Perhaps it was because he wished such to be the case that he had thought it. Then, too, Laura had always seemed to be fond of Jack. To be sure, she had never said anything that would indicate anything in particular, but it had always been Dolly's cherished wish that his chum Jack and his sister Laura should some day marry—and when they had settled, Dolly had a secret hope that they would let him come and live with them, the two beings he thought most of in the world, and thought of almost continually. Of course, he would never marry; but they would all have plenty of money, and they would be very happy together. It was too bad. The only dream of Dolly's life had been broken, and he, in turn, felt that he was quite the most miserable man in the world. Of course, he would never wish again that they should marry. If his sister actually detested Jack, he would do all in his power with his father to alter the latter's decision. He would appeal to Jack's own manliness. He was sure he could break it off.

He went over to his sister, who was still sitting, with clenched hands and tearful eyes, where he had left her. He stooped over and kissed her white forehead.

"By Jove! you know," he said, "don't worry, Lol—don't worry, old chum—sister. I'll fix it, don't you know. Jack's always been a good friend of mine, and once he said he'd do anything I evah asked him—it was after I did him a favah, you know. I'm rawther ashamed to speak of it, but I will now—and I'll make him give you up—and I'll make him pwomise nevah to come heah again at all. By Jove, I will!—and I'll take his cane back to him myself. He'll nevah come heah again. He used to be my chum, you know, but Jack Hazzard shall nevah come heah again to bother my deah old chum, my sister."

"But it isn't Jack Hazzard!" It was a very timid voice now. He looked at her quickly. She was blushing, and his heart gave a sudden jump.

"Who is it—who is it?" he said so quickly for him that he noticed it himself.

"The Count de Froissart," answered his sister, almost in a whisper.

'By Jove!" said Dolly, and then he was silent for a few minutes. When he looked at her again she was sitting as he had seen her at first, with her arms on the desk and her head resting on them. But she was not crying. Girls are liable to do anything to hide a blush.

"I don't like him," said Dolly. The head made no answer.

"Do you like him?" he asked. The head shook furiously in the negative.

"Of cawse you don't," said Dolly; "you told me you detested him—but I've just found out something, old sister, and I want you to tell me the truth about it. Dear old Jack Hazzard, poor Jack Hazzard, who hasn't anything but his heart, don't you know, my chum Jack Hazzard—he loves you, sister, and—you—love—him?" The head bent just slightly in the affirmative.

"Thank Heaven!" said Dolly.

Digitized by Google

Dolly spent the afternoon at his club as usual. But he was a very much preoccupied Dolly. Instead of spending the afternoon with the crowd of smart and jolly fellows who tolerated his modest silence for financial reasons, he remained quite alone in a corner of the room. The smart fellows made it a point to go up to him one by one and ask him if it were really true that he was "thinking." But Dolly disarmed them by the gravity of his manner and the look almost of decision that had come to his face. There was one, however, who did not make any allusion to Dolly's thoughtfulness. It was the Count de Froissart, a French nobleman who stayed, so it was whispered, but a short time in one place as a rule, and who intended to marry an heiress. He was not a bogus count. His bankruptcy was too public a matter to leave any doubt about the genuineness of his title. And it was no reflection against him that he wished to marry money. In the matrimonial market the Count was no bankrupt. Are not titles worth more than money?

The Count was more than agreeable to Dolly, and many were the whispered "I told you so's," among the other clubmen as they dined together that evening.

"They say it's all arranged," said Jack Dashing, with a sigh, for Laura Nostrand was not only an heiress but a beautiful girl.

"We're not in it," said Tom Barry gruffly.

"I take it that these French noblemen are cleverer at making love to the fathers and sons than they are to the daughters," said Kerman, who was a journalist who considered himself witty.

"They arrive at their destination just the same," said Dusen.

Eight o'clock arrived, and Dolly and the Count were sitting before their last bottle of wine.

"I think," said the Count, "that I'll stroll up to your house and make a short call on your very beautiful, your exceptionally interesting sister—besides, I have still a few points to discuss with your father. He is a man I was born to admire."

"Of cawse," said Dolly languidly.

"Possibly I may have the pleasure of seeing you later at the club. I have the greatest desire to make your more intimate acquaintance."

"P'waps," drawled Dolly.

"Then I shall return," said the Count, rising to depart.

"By-the-way," continued Dolly, "if you do happen to be back here by nine o'clock, p'waps you wouldn't mind giving me a lesson, don't you know, deah boy, in baccarat—don't know anything about baccarat, you know, and want to learn. Be awfully stupid for you, don't you know, but——"

"Not at all, not at all. I will return promptly at nine o'clock, I pledge you my word of honour. *Au revoir.*" And the Count departed.

"He will not call on the dear old girl-chum to-night," said Dolly to himself. "Eight to nine is hardly time enough, and that man, I'm suah, would prefer to gamble with a man who didn't know how, to calling on his *fiancée*—at least I hope he would—and if he doesn't call to-night he never will again."

At nine o'clock that evening the Count and Dolly repaired to a private room in the club.

At three o'clock the next morning they emerged from it. The Count looked as fresh as a white-winged yacht when she plunges into her native element. His white teeth glistened and his eyes sparkled with the pleasure of abundant success. As for Dolly he was a sorry sight. His right eye blinked sleepily behind his monocle, and his left seemed closed altogether. His hair was untidy and his collar and necktie were sadly in need of adjusting. There was an unusual flush on his face, too, and his mouth was twitching.

At the door of the club they parted.

"I condole with you, Monsieur," said the Count; "you play a magnificent game of baccarat. You are far my superior at play, I assure you. It was all a matter of luck—all a matter of unfortunate luck."

"No," drawled Dolly, as he turned up the street, "it was a matter of bwains, don't you know—a matter of bwains."

It was quite four o'clock in the morning when Dolly walked feebly into his home. It was the first time in all his life he had been out so late or even late at all, unless his presence somewhere else accounted for his absence. He was not surprised, therefore, to find a light in the library, and to hear the rustle of papers that told that his father was waiting for him. He walked unsteadily into the room, walked up face to face with his father, and sank half-exhausted into a chair.

"Where have you been?" asked the latter sternly.

"Club," said Dolly laconically.

"Doing what, if you please?" continued his father, with an indication of rising anger.

"Gambling," said Dolly, still laconically.

"Fool!" said his father.

"I have heard you call me that befoah, father," drawled Dolly.

For a time the older man was silent. Then he spoke again.

"How much have you lost, Adolphus?" he asked.

"Every penny," said Dolly.

"Every penny?" gasped the old man.

"Every farthing," corrected Dolly.

"But, my son, you had in the bank something like twenty thousand pounds?"

"Gave cheques for all of it," said Dolly.

"But you can stop the cheques——"

"Gave my word of honour that I wouldn't," drawled Dolly again.

"With whom were you playing?" asked his father quickly.

"A professional gambler and a cheat," answered Dolly.

Again the older man was silent for a time. Finally he said:

"Adolphus, when I gave you that money I told you that the income from it was sufficent to support you in as much style as I considered good for your well-being, especially as you had, at no expense, a home and the use of my stable. I did not and do not propose to be treated by my son as most rich men have been treated by theirs. The twenty thousand pounds is a bagatelle. Your action is something far different. When I gave it to you, you will remember that I warned you that if you spent part of it you would have to get along on the income from what remained. If you spent all of it, you would have to go to work and earn your own living. You accepted the conditions. Now, sir, you shall——"

"I will go to work, father, and earn my own living." He walked towards the door and halted a moment irresolutely.

"Father," he said, "I want you to bweak off the match between the Count de Froissart and my dear sister. She loves an honest man and an honest man loves her—besides, the Count de Froissart is the man who won my money—p'waps it won't be necessary to bweak off the match. By Jove, you know, I don't think it will. He did not call on either you or her to-night in order to gamble with me—and he can catch a boat for France to-morrow."

The two men stood looking at each other for a moment or two. And then as though each knew what the other was thinking, and as though each knew what the other meant, they walked silently towards each other and gripped each other by the hand.

* * * * *

Dolly took his usual place at the table of his coterie the next day, and listened to their jokes, most of which were directed at him, and tried hard to understand them. He was delighted with everything all the afternoon, but his delight reached a climax when a generously strong hand was placed on his shoulder. Dolly looked up and ejaculated: "Jack!"

"Dolly," said the latter, "come over here a minute. I have something to tell you." They walked to the further end of the room.

"Dolly," said Jack again, "I'm going to marry your sister. I'm the happiest man in the world."

"No, you are not, don't you know, old chap," answered Dolly; "I am."

**Thomas Winthrop Hall.**

Digitized by Google

HOW TO START THIS GREAT CONTEST TO-DAY.—The three numbers of *Short Stories* containing the first coupons may be obtained through any newsagent for threepence, or will be sent post free for 4½d. by the Publisher, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

# £25 IN CASH PRIZES!

## 1st Prize, £10. 2nd Prize, £5. 3rd Prize, £2.

### And Eight Cash Prizes of £1 each.

## WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

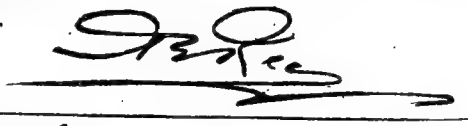
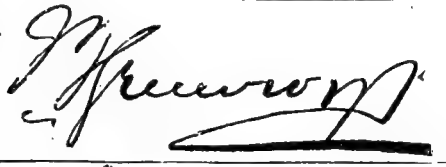
**Below you will find five signatures. Each of these signatures is the ordinary signature of the person to whom it belongs. The writing is not assumed for the occasion; it is just the way in which each of the persons signs his name to letters or to cheques. The first three sets of signatures have already appeared, and the numbers containing them can be had from any newsvendor, or from this office for 1½d. each post free.**

**What you have to do is to print in the space opposite each signature the name (initials, Christian name and surname) which you think it to be. No one but the Editor possesses the correct names of all the signatures shown. If you are in doubt as to the correct rendering of any signature or signatures ask some of your friends. When you have filled up the coupon to the best of your ability, cut it out and keep it by you, with the other coupons, until you see an announcement in SHORT STORIES telling you to send them in, together with the coupons which will appear in SHORT STORIES.**

## CONDITIONS.

(1) The name must be clearly printed in ink opposite each signature.
(2) Only one name is allowed in each space.
(3) No alterations are allowed in the words.
(4) When you have filled up your coupon, cut it out and keep it by you, together with the coupons which have appeared and will appear in SHORT STORIES.
(5) Each competitor may send only one set of coupons, but all the members of one household may compete. Each set will be accepted independently.
(6) In all cases the Editor's decision is final, and competitors may only enter on this condition.

COUPON No. 4.

| | |
|---|---|
| No. 19.  | |
| No. 20. | |
| No. 21.  | |
| No. 22. | |
| No. 23. | |

*NAME*.....

*ADDRESS*.....

Digitized by Google

THIS SERIES CONCLUDES BELOW.

# DECOYED!

**A Striking Series of Society Revelations. Told by the Decoy herself.**

## LAST EPISODE.

### A Decoy no Longer.

I HAD escaped with my life. But I trembled with fear of what might still await me, for I no sooner closed the door behind me, than I realised how helpless I still was.

Suppose the coast was not quite so clear as I had hoped, and I failed to reach the street before being perhaps seized and choked from behind, so that I could not even make an outcry? Or suppose that there had been some misunderstanding about the arrangements of my friends, and that I had merely escaped from one trap to fall into another?

No wonder that my heart palpitated with fear, and that, hampered by having to carry a bag in each hand, my progress towards the gate seemed to be inordinately slow!

"Turn to the right, walk about twenty yards, and you will find a hansom waiting for you."

The doctor had instructed me to this effect. But when I saw the hansom I paused, panic-stricken, for I remembered that other hansom in which Mr. O'Connell had been driven to his doom, and I was possessed by a sudden fear that, after all, Dr. Farnie was merely taking the easiest way of disposing of me.

As I slowly walked a little nearer to the vehicle, the figure of a man emerged from a gateway which had previously sheltered him from observation, and my fears vanished on the instant, for I recognised him as no other than Lord Broomville.

Now I was safe indeed, and an exclamation of thankfulness escaped me as I was joyfully clasped in the arms of the man who already held my heart in his keeping.

"Forgive me, dearest," he whispered, after pressing a warm kiss on my lips. "Forgive me! I am so overjoyed to know that you are safe, that I couldn't resist claiming a lover's privilege."

"And you!" I whispered back, as he quickly relieved me of my impedimenta. "You are safe too? You have escaped from those terrible bogus policemen? Oh! I am so thankful!"

"You are thankful to know that *I* am safe?"

"How can I be otherwise? I have suffered torments on your account!"

Lord Broomville seemed to think that this speech required another kiss by way of appreciative answer, for how could I help showing him that his safety was even dearer to me than my own?

"This, darling, means that you will marry me by-and-bye, doesn't it?"

For all answer to this question I put my hand tremulously into my lover's disengaged one, and he was well content with this mute acceptance.

"God willing, Vivienne, you shall never regret converting me into the happiest of men," he murmured rapturously. "But we have much to do, and must make good our departure at once."

With ready obedience I stepped into the waiting hansom, and I cared not then whither I was driven, for was I not being guarded by the man who was dearer than all else in the world to me?

Nevertheless, I did not let the precious brief-bag out of my sight, for it represented the whole future of the real father whom I was longing to meet, and I did not intend to fail in any part of my duty towards him.

It seemed only a few minutes ere the cab stopped at the Palace Hotel. A couple of rooms and a maid were already engaged in readiness for me, and after assuring himself that I was in safe hands, Lord Broomville bade me a brief farewell.

"I have an appointment, even at this unearthly time," he said, "and it is important that I should keep it, so I must tear myself away from you for a few hours."

"You'll be very careful?" I said anxiously. "Don't let those men who acted as policemen get you into their clutches again. You might not escape so easily another time."

A happy laugh emphasised my lover's reply.

"Don't let them worry you again, dear. I assure you, they are absolutely harmless, so far as we are concerned, for it was because they were already in my pay that they sought an opportunity of convincing 'Mr. D'Alton' that they were ready to do anything for money. I could have laughed aloud when they 'arrested' me, if I had not been anxious about you. But I had to keep up the deception awhile longer, until restitution had been made to your father, so I was apparently driven off, to be disposed of at the 'City Office' by Kaspar and Co. But I am still safe and sound, and so are you, my dearest."

Another moment, and my affianced husband had started on his return journey, and I sought a few hours' rest, happy in the firm belief that all was going well with myself and my friends.

* * * * *

At nine o'clock I was dressed again, ready for any further developments that might take place, and I was not at all surprised when Lord Broomville presented himself, for he had promised to drive with me to see my father, directly after breakfast.

"You look as bright as if you had slept all night," he smiled, "and as if you had never had a worry in your life."

"You forget," was my happy answer, "how much I have to compensate me for past worries. But let us make haste. I am dying to know my father."

"And he will be happy when he is able to remember all about you. At present his mind is still clouded, so far as past events are concerned. But I am well fortified with a supply of the antidote you mentioned, and we will soon put everything right."

"Suppose the tulip-juice does not act as we hope it will?"

"If you made no mistake in reading what the book said of it, I feel confident of its efficacy."

"And I am sure I have made no mistake, so we will hope for the best."

Each yard that we drove served to increase my excitement now, for marvellous things were to take place within the hour, and I could hardly restrain my impatience when we actually drove up to a house near Lancaster Gate.

"Does my father live here?" I asked breathlessly, receiving for reply: "He is here now. He has lived in Fulham for many years, earning his living as a clerk. But an old friend of his recognised him lately, and made it his business to work for his re-instatement. Now that he is likely to recover his memory, you will learn much that still puzzles the friend—Mr. Halliday."

Five minutes later I stood in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Halliday, who both welcomed me with tears of pleasure in

Digitized by Google

their eyes. There was also a Dr. Midhurst there, and a tal man, of aristocratic bearing, who looked at me with a pathetic lack of recognition, but of whose actual personality I had not the slightest doubt.

This was indeed my father, and it was heart-breaking to think that even the sight of his only child had no power to re-awaken the memory which had laid dormant for so many cruel years.

"Never mind," was my cheerful reflection. "He will know me directly."

While I was trying to rouse my father's recognition Lord Broomville and Mr. Halliday had been swift of action.

"D'Alton, do you mind drinking this?" asked Mr. Halliday. "We are hoping it will do you good."

"My name is Vincent—Henry Vincent, as I have already explained to you," was the puzzled reply. "But I shall be very thankful if this medicine will benefit me in the way you suggested. Thank you."

With the word "Thank you," my father took the tiny glass held out to him, and drained it on the instant, whilst I, terribly anxious, watched for the slightest sign of dawning recognition.

This, however, was deferred for the present, for, with a wild, inarticulate cry, my father clapped his hands to his head, and swayed about as if he were in agony. Then he dropped like a log, and lay prone on the floor, the picture of death itself, and I shrieked in terror at the sight.

"Take her away, please," was Dr. Midhurst's hurried direction. "We must raise him to a couch, and loosen his collar."

"He is dead! We have killed him!" I sobbed.

"He is not dead yet," was the stern response. "Please make as little trouble as you can."

The doctor was very blunt of speech. But his words had their desired effect, and though it was half-an-hour before I heard any further news, I sat, mute and motionless, until Lord Broomville came and kissed me compassionately.

"Take heart, dearest," he said. "Your father is now lying in a sound, restful sleep, and Dr. Midhurst is confident that when he wakes he will know himself to be Beverley D'Alton."

"Pray Heaven he may be right!" I murmured, and when, an hour later, Mrs. Halliday sought me again, there was a glad light on her face which told me that all was indeed well.

* * * * *

"Your father shows signs of waking, and the doctor thinks that it would be wise for yours to be the first face he sees."

Such was the message brought to me, and, trembling with carefully-suppressed excitement, I followed my kind hostess to the couch on which my father was stirring uneasily, as if dreams were disturbing his still dormant senses.

It was an indescribably solemn moment. The sleeping man. The suspense-racked girl. The watchful doctor. The devoted friends!

All but one were almost breathless with anticipation of what the next five minutes might bring forth. And he—ah! how could I resist an exclamation of joy when he opened his eyes and gazed into my face with astounded rapture!

"Helena!" he cried, springing to his feet with the agility of a boy. "Helena my darling wife! Is it possible that I have been mistaken, and that God has spared you to me after all?"

"Father!" I sobbed, rushing to embrace him. "Father! Oh! how thankful I am that you have recovered."

"Recovered? Why, I have never been ill! And yet—surely I must have been very ill, for I dreamt that you had left me for ever! And now I see you—alive and well! But how different you are! And your dress is odd too!"

My father's face, just now transfigured with joy, grew very troubled. He had at first been misled by my evident resemblance to his girl-wife. But various discrepancies were forcing themselves upon his notice, and he looked helplessly around him, in search of enlightenment.

I fervently thanked God for the great blessing He had vouchsafed me, but my heart still ached for my poor father, and I felt it impossible to tell him that so many years of his life had been stolen from him.

"I don't know this place," he continued slowly. "Helena, what's wrong with me? My eyes must surely be playing me false! Everything is so strange. Tell Bridgeman I want him. He gave me some medicine for my cold, but I can't understand what I am doing here."

Mr. Halliday, who had purposely kept out of sight, now came forward and faced his old friend.

"Beverley," he said, "time has made a big stride since your treacherous valet robbed you of your memory, and turned you adrift to earn your living as best you could——"

"Earn my living! Nonsense! That is a problem I have never had to face in my life!"

Evidently a marvellous thing had happened. The antidote had restored the patient's memory to the moment in which he must have taken the fiendish dose of blighting poison. But it had left his mind a blank concerning subsequent events.

"I am strangely puzzled," he faltered. "My wife is unlike herself. And you—friend Halliday—you look many years older than when I last saw you."

"I *am* fifteen years older," was the pitying reply. "And so are you, old friend. Those years have been a tragedy. But, please God, your barque is now sailing in smooth waters, and for the rest of your days it will be anchored in the Haven of Happiness."

The words, spoken so solemnly, carried conviction with them.

"Fifteen years!" was the horrified rejoinder. "Do you mean to tell me that my brain has slept for fifteen years?"

For all answer, Mr. Halliday, whose lips were twitching with sympathetic emotion, pointed to a pierglass which surmounted a console table in the room, and we all anxiously watched my unfortunate father as he hastily strode up to it, and looked at the reflection which faced him.

"It is even so!" came from between the white lips. "I am no longer young! I am a modern Rip van Winkle."

"But *he* came back to find himself unwanted and forgotten, while for *you* there wait the regard of old friends, and the love of a devoted daughter!"

"A daughter? Ah, now I understand! This is not my Helena! It is Vivienne, my little Vivienne, grown into her mother's likeness!"

"Father!"

"My darling! My dear one!"

Tears flowed from my father's eyes, and my own were blinded with emotion, as I was folded in his loving embrace. But my heart beat high with gratitude to God, for, with His help, I had been able to foil our enemies, and had won a parent whom I could love and honour.

* * * * *

There was a long story of fraud and wickedness to unravel. But Beverley D'Alton could tell us nothing that happened to him after he had been subjected to the malignant experiment which put it beyond his power to betray his enemies. We could only conjecture that they must have insured his return to England from Cologne, where he had been staying for a few days after taking me to Bochum to school. Then his valet appropriated his money and papers, and passed himself off as Beverley D'Alton.

My father's discovery by Mr. Halliday was nothing less than providential. The latter was senior partner of a big banking firm, and when, some months ago, a man calling himself Henry Vincent was engaged as assistant cashier, he was amazed at his marvellous resemblance to his old-time friend, Beverley D'Alton, who had apparently resolved not to live in England again, but of whose great good luck all the financial world was talking.

"Henry Vincent" had not the slightest recollection of anything that had happened to him prior to fifteen years ago. But the actual truth did not occur to Mr. Halliday until he was at a reception at which the supposed Beverley D'Alton and I were present. He had known my mother well before her marriage, and saw my resemblance to her, although he had never seen her since she was taken abroad in search of health.

Digitized by Google

He was, however, puzzling his brains to understand what was meant by the fact that the much-lauded millionaire bore no resemblance to the Beverley D'Alton whom he had known in years gone by, when he was accosted by Viscount Broomville.

"How do you do, Mr. Halliday?" he said. "You seem to be eyeing the D'Altons very curiously. Father and daughter are not much alike, eh?"

"And that is really supposed to be Beverley D'Alton?"

"It *is* the very individual."

"I have my doubts about that. I knew D'Alton when he was a young man, but that person bears no resemblance to him."

"Hush! Let nobody else hear you say that yet," was Lord Broomville's eager injunction. "What you have said supports my belief that imposture and rascality are in the air."

Of course, Mr. Halliday wanted to know a great deal all at once. But Lord Broomville was cautious, and made an appointment for the next morning, when remarkable disclosures were made on both sides.

It was resolved to work carefully and expeditiously, and Lord Broomville promptly disappeared from his usual haunts, to pursue certain investigations, while Mr. Halliday satisfied himself, by judicious questioning, that "Henry Vincent," who remembered nothing prior to fifteen years ago, must indeed be the real Beverley D'Alton.

Thus, when I was almost distracted by doubts and fears, willing workers were doing their best to solve the mysteries which surrounded me, and bring the gang of criminals to justice.

The incident in the seed shop gave them their first clue about the strange mental condition of "Henry Vincent," and their plans embraced the idea of experimenting upon him while I was there also.

Miss D'Alton was their next object of solicitude, and the ultimate recognition between herself and her nephew was a very affecting one, but joyful in the extreme.

One other victim of Mrs. Sherwood's poisonous concoction was Alan Melrose. But he and his sisters were shadowed on their northward journey by detectives in the pay of Lord Broomville, and the mock specialist, who proved to be no other than the murderous Kaspar Krause, was cleverly caught in his own trap, with the result that his intended victims returned to London in great excitement. Alan was soon as completely restored as my father and Miss D'Alton, and he was able to explain all about the missing £80,000 worth of securities, all of which were eventually returned to him.

The Greathams had not been victimised at all. Claude Greatham received a secret visit from his old friend, Lord Broomville, and was henceforth an indefatigable worker in the cause of justice. Indeed, it was he who introduced Dr. Farnie, whose remarkable powers had been of such signal service to us.

Speaking of Dr. Farnie brings me back to where I left him, after making my escape from the house in Park Lane. His task was a delicate one. He had to try to keep the impostor, who was indeed and in truth no other than my father's former valet, Tallis Bridgeman, in thorough mental subjection until there was no doubt that I had got safely out of the house with the precious papers which had been so useful in helping the ex-valet and his wife to pursue their career of imposture.

In this he was quite successful, but his power failed to last until a posse of detectives arrived on the scene, and his devotion to our cause nearly proved fatal to him, for he was locked in his own room, resisting a determined attempt to murder him, when timely relief arrived, and caused the arch criminal to direct against himself the poisoned dagger which had been intended for the doctor who had befooled him so cleverly.

We none of us wanted a scandal, so the affair was hushed up as much as possible. The public certainly learnt that a faithless valet, his career of treachery being discovered, had evaded justice by committing suicide. But many details were kept quiet, and my father took Aunt Helena and myself abroad for a while, the Park Lane house being closed as a matter of course.

Prince Gorouki had both his diamond ring and his marriage settlement returned to him, and though he no doubt thinks me a very fickle young person, he is ignorant of the peril he ran when he became a suitor for my hand.

Mrs. Sherwood, or, to give her her right name, Mrs. Bridgeman, escaped with her sister-in-law, Annchen Krause, but both women lost their lives in a shipwreck, and many people were thankful to know that no further mischief could emanate from them.

Susan is my maid still, and is greatly excited over my forthcoming marriage with Viscount Broomville. So is Aunt Helena. And so is my former governess, Fräulein Wernher, who has come all the way from Bochum to be present.

As for our many friends, their troubles have ended as happily as mine have, and they all do their best to help me to forget the terrible time when I was brought to England to be a "decoy."

The End.

## Our New Serial—"Phantom Shadows."

Do you like the opening chapters of Arnold Bennett's story, which appear in this number? Do you like the splendid illustrations from Reginald Cleaver's pencil? I am sure you must do. And I am equally as sure that you will like the instalments of "Phantom Shadows" that are to follow. They tell how Theodore Racksole and his daughter Nella fight a grim fight, the issue of which is always in the balance, with Jules, the rascally waiter, and his accomplices. The progress of the schemes and counter-schemes are related in a manner that holds the reader's attention throughout. Not a dull line will be found in the whole story. On page 423 there appears a reduced facsimile of next week's cover. Look out for it on the bookstalls and in the newsagents' racks and windows.

## The Signature Competition.

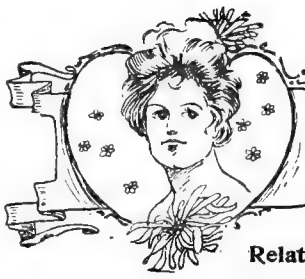
I hope you are all entering for our unique competition. The fourth set of signatures appears on page 427. If you have not already started to solve them, remember that you can still get the back numbers containing the first three sets. I should advise you to lose no time in procuring these, else you may find you are too late. Get your friends to enter for the competition as well. There is much amusement to be derived from it, and everybody has an equal opportunity of carrying off a prize.

## The Tenth Unsolved Love Problem.

I shall announce as soon as I possibly can the name of the winner of the guinea offered in connection with the problem entitled "The Heart of Claire Gilchrist." Another, the final one of this series, which has been so ppular, will appear shortly.

**Your Editor.**

Digitized by Google



# Tit for Tat.

**Relating how the Reply to a Question was Postponed, and how it was Answered in the End.**

"Why won't I marry you? Oh, well, for, several reasons; but I will be charitable and give but one—I do not love you."

She spoke in the most careless tone possible — as though a proposal of marriage was just the most everyday occurrence in the world, and he who makes it even more commonplace and so stupid.

He looked the picture of a disappointed lover—why was not he bored with her as she was undoubtedly with him? He sat uncomfortably on an uncomfortable chair, and toyed nervously with the spoon in the cup of tea that she had humanely given him.

She put up her hand to hide a yawn.

"More sugar?" she asked with indifferent sweetness. "You look as if you wanted something."

"So I do—I want you!" he blurted out desperately.

This was so ridiculous that she laughed aloud.

"But you can't have me," she said, her mood waxing more and more flippant as her patience waned, "while you can have sugar. I advise you to take the sweet that is within your reach, and not cry for the moon. Don't you know the fate of the man in the fable who cried for the moon?" she asked innocently. "The moon laughed at him," and she rose and laughed wickedly at this fiction.

He rose, too. She did not expect he would have sense enough to accept her motion to adjourn. He gulped down his tea and placed the cup upon a table near, and pulled himself together a new man—the dose had done him good.

"Will you allow me to finish the fable?" he asked politely. "The moon has two faces, you know; and when the man had levelled a telescope at her and seen all her imperfections, and blessed his stars that he had cried in vain, why, she—but you can guess what the moon did."

And he picked up his hat and, bowing profoundly, left the room.

* * * * *

By an odd coincidence it was at another tea that they met again after many days.

She saw him approaching her through the crowd above which he towered, and their last meeting was brought vividly to mind, and with it a bright blush to her cheek, for though on that occasion she completely routed him, that parting shot of his wounded her vanity, if nothing else; and to-night as she looked upon his handsome face, not seen for so long, she felt a sharp pain in her heart that made her fear that it, too, was wounded. Her one thought was to escape him, and as the crush was too great for her to get out of his way, she turned her back upon him unceremoniously.

Evidently he had no reason to avoid her, for notwithstanding this impolite action on her part the next moment he was addressing her, and she turned to him with a guilty blush.

"How do you do?" he said with nonchalance, just as if they were but slight acquaintances, with no bitter social memories in the past to bind them together with the link of suffering. She wished he felt as keenly as she did. "Were you not cruel enough to me at our last meeting," he continued pleasantly, "that you must needs cut me at this? Perhaps you think I am going to make a fool of myself as I did then!" and the way he laughed brought the tears into her eyes.

"Ah!" she sighed, so low that he had to bend his head to hear her, "it was somebody else who was the fool then—not you!"

"Who?" he asked, with a ring of triumph in his voice.

"I!"

She whispered the little monosyllable in so shamefaced a way that he had to bend still lower to catch it.

The tide of humanity had set towards the rooms where the refreshments were served, and left them standing alone. Perhaps she fondly fancied he would take her in his arms at this confession, but she was sadly disappointed. Instead he drew himself up to his full height, with a smile on his lips that struck terror to her soul, and said coolly:

"Gallantry forbids that I should agree with you, yet I dare not contradict you, so we will let it stand an open question. Perhaps I shall answer it when I return from America—I sail to-morrow. I hope you will wish me success—I have been so unsuccessful in my matrimonial ventures on this side of the water, I am going to try my luck over there."

Was not her humiliation vengeance enough for him, that he should torment her in this way? He had only to look at her face to see that he *was* tormenting her. For one moment the room swam round her, but the next, by a supreme effort, she conquered her faintness and looked at him unflinchingly.

"I wish you all the success you deserve," she said calmly.

For a moment each looked the other steadily in the face, as if each were trying to measure the other's power of resistance, and then, without another word, they turned away.

They were quits.

* * * * *

They met again at another social function.

"How do you do?" she said. "Where is your wife?"

"My wife? She is in the future. I am sorry to say I am so unfortunate as to be a bachelor still. My quest for a wife was as unsuccessful in America as here, with this difference—here the girl I wanted wouldn't have me, there I wouldn't have the girl whether she wanted me or not. Somehow, foreigners and I don't hit it off very well together."

"That is something of my experience with Count Offenstein," she observed, smiling a little.

"Ah! the Count—I heard something about that. You are engaged to him, are you not?" he asked carelessly.

"I was—until I discovered that he thought I was an heiress, and he discovered his mistake."

"So we are both free—it looks as if we were reserved for each other," he remarked dispassionately. "Perhaps this meeting is a special dispensation of Providence, and we shall call down eternal wrath upon our defenceless heads if we do not accept it as such."

"But I do not see how we can help ourselves," she laughed.

"There is one way—we might be married," he suggested.

"But in that case the remedy would be worse than the disease, don't you think?" she asked.

"Perhaps. But being a doctor, you know, you cannot expect me not to wish you to accept my remedy," he answered.

"True—a doctor is always thinking of his fee!" she exclaimed. "Well—perhaps—I will accept your—remedy if you promise not to make your fee too exorbitant—remember, I am not a heiress."

"Oh! you can pay me in kisses!"

* * * * *

"How about that question you were going to answer when you returned from abroad?" she asked mischievously, after the fee had been paid.

"Well, have I not kept my word? I answered it when I proposed we should get married. I would not want a fool for a wife, would I?"

**Mabel E. Baugh.**

Digitized by Google

# An April Fool.

**Showing How a Jealous Girl Unwittingly Helped Her Rival.**

The Chester family kept, with suitable festivities, Christmas, New Year's Day, All-Fools' Day, Hallowe'en, and so on, straight through the year.

They were fools once a year, if not oftener, as Will said; and to tell the truth, the first of April was the "maddest, merriest day" of the whole year through for them.

Viewed from this standpoint, therefore, it did not seem quite so impertinently cruel to play a trick upon Eva Atwood.

True, she was a stranger among them, almost, having lived in the Chester family but a few months, and knew nothing or little of their customs; and the only motherless daughter of a wealthy, indulgent gentleman, residing in a great city, would not be apt to know much of these hilarious country pastimes. But as her cousin Belle said contemptuously, she might know, and there was no earthly reason why she should be exempted from a joke unless because she was rich. And Belle curled her lips in scorn.

Belle was discussing her plan with her sister Annie and Cora Webster, her friend.

"The best of it is, Allison Foster's initials are A. F., which stand for April Fool, and then two other young men of our set have the same ones, Albert Follonsby and Arthur French," said Belle, with animation.

"But Eva does not know either of these," said Annie.

"So much the better, goosie; but if she learns of the joke she will have no one to blame but her own stupidity."

"Can you write like Allison Foster?" asked Cora.

"Near enough to deceive her. I have lots of notes of his that I can study."

"No doubt of that," laughed Cora.

"Well, don't chatter, and I will see what I can do."

Belle sat down to her writing-desk and soon produced the following note, which she read to them:

"My Dear Little Eva,—*You will, no doubt, be surprised to receive this note, we have known each other so short a time; but since the first evening we met I have loved you.*

*And you, my darling, do you return this love, the first and only love of my devoted heart? Never answer this if you do not respond to my love, for I could not bear it; but make me happy by wearing a geranium leaf in your hair the next time I come to the house. By this token I shall know that you love me, even as I love you.—Yours devotedly,*

"A. F."

*April* 1.

"Oh! Won't it be funny to see her going about with a geranium leaf stuck in her hair, and he will not know anything about it at all, and only we three in the secret?" said Cora thoughtlessly.

"I think it would be cruel," said Annie indignantly. "I never realised before how mean it would be; and she a stranger among us, and the dearest little soul that ever breathed."

"So you will give the game away?" said Belle angrily.

"No, I won't; but I wash my hands of the whole affair," and Annie walked off, but returned to say significantly:

"Have you thought, Belle, if Eva doesn't wear the geranium leaf, that it is a virtual refusal; and if you consent to wear it (you know what I mean), you accept what she refuses?"

But to this Belle deigned no reply, only to Cora she said, after her sister left the room:

"Pshaw! I know she loves him."

"What shall you do with the letter?"

"Send it by post. Will you drop it in the pillar-box as you go by?"

"Yes, but remember you must let me know when the fun begins. I should be sorry to miss it."

"All right." And the girls separated; Cora to return home by way of the post-office, where she dropped the letter, Belle to join the family downstairs.

A lovely, sweet-faced young girl sat on the sofa, cutting paper dolls for little Isabel. Annie was reading, as was her wont. Mrs. Chester was sewing. Just then in sauntered Will, who was home from college for a few days.

"Well, cousin mine," said he, sitting down beside Eva, "are you looking forward to the first of April?"

"Why, what comes then?" asked she.

"Surprises," said he solemnly; "for instance, if you wished to present me with your cheque for ten thousand pounds, to-morrow would be just the day to do it. I should be surprised at that."

"So should I," said she demurely, with dimples lurking in her cheeks.

"The children are up to all kinds of games the first of April, dear," said Mrs. Chester, smiling. "Don't let them torment you."

By Will's explanation she imagined it to be a day of surprises after the style of Christmas, only with more secrecy, and she thought it a good time to make each of her cousins and her aunt a suitable present.

Her father was very wealthy, and, at her request, only a week before had sent her some gifts which she waited but a suitable opportunity to bestow.

Mr. Atwood had sent his daughter to reside in Wilmot with her aunt, because she was delicate, and he hoped the country air would be of benefit to her. Only on this consideration would he have separated from his only child even for a week. He hoped and expected that his sister's home would be very pleasant, and Mrs. Chester was indeed very kind, as were all the family except Belle, a proud, handsome girl of just Eva's age.

But Belle, from the day of her cousin's arrival, had been secretly envious of Eva, of her wealth, jewels, silks, and laces; of her gentle, ladylike manners, her beauty, everything; for when envy enters the soul it is insatiable, and feeds upon any material it can seize for this purpose. Eva was rich, it is true, but she valued riches only as they enabled her to make others happy; she had jewels, silks, and laces, but she seldom wore them, and dressed far more simply than Belle; her manners ought not to have offended, since they sprang from unselfishness; and her loveliness was of the delicate, unassuming order that was far less effective than the regal beauty of her cousin Belle.

But the latter fancied there was a growing friendship between Eva and Allison Foster, and this fact completed her dislike.

We all understand how objects rise in the estimation when others begin to prize them. It was so with Belle. Allison Foster was undoubtedly good, handsome, and talented, a young physician sure to make his mark, and Belle had encouraged his attentions previous to her cousin's arrival, although she had not fully made up her mind that she would marry him if he should offer himself, for a still more eligible

Digitized by Google

match might intervene. But when she saw her cousin's evident appreciation of his worth and manliness—her cousin, who had seen so many rich and cultured people—she grew jealous of every word or look that passed between them, and she burnt to humiliate her rival.

If love is blind, jealousy is doubly so. Eva was not her rival in any sense, for Allison had only a kindly feeling in his heart for the fair young stranger, the glamour of Belle's beauty still being round him. Indeed, although nothing was said to her about the matter, Eva felt sure of his love for Belle; and, though she wondered in her heart that he had not chosen Annie, instead, she never thought of herself in connection with the matter. She did admire him, and liked to have him talk with her, and she thought Belle must be very happy indeed.

The first of April arrived, and the family, suspicious of each other, sat down to the breakfast table.

The eggs were passed round, but no one touched them except Eva and little Isabel. Their temerity was rewarded by finding them all right. (Mrs. Chester had handed them round.)

Encouraged by this, Will and his sisters each took one, but found only the shells cleverly filled with salt.

The coffee was fragrant and excellent, as usual; the cream neither salted nor sour, and the lumps of sugar white and glistening. But no amount of stirring would dissolve them. Extracting his with his spoon, Will rapped it on the table.

"Marble, girls, sure's you're alive," he cried. "Good for you, mother. 'You see, dear," mimicking his mother's tone, turning to his cousin, "'the children are up to all kinds of games,' and mother is as much a child as any of us."

Mrs. Chester laughed and they all enjoyed their jokes immensely. Just then the letters were brought in. There were only two, one for Will and one for Eva. Will looked dismayed at the contents of his, but brightened up almost immediately.

"Own up now; which of you wrote this letter?"

Each one solemnly asserted that they had neither written it nor caused it to be written.

"What is it, dear?" asked his mother anxiously.

"Nothing, only one of our larks must have got out. The head-master want my presence immediately at the college to answer certain charges, and so on. I thought it was an April fraud."

"Oh, Will!" exclaimed his mother.

"Serves him right," said Belle. "College boys are no better than cubs."

"Thank you, sissy," said Will, making her a low bow.

"Hallo, what is this?"—gathering up his text-books and finding a ten pound note in his Greek. "I suppose father sent it, mother?"

"Ask me to-morrow," answered his mother, trying to be merry, but worried at her son's difficulty in college.

"Did you put it there, Eva?"

"Ask me to-morrow," she answered, exactly as his mother had done.

Belle thrust her hand into her pocket and drew forth a lovely bracelet—yes, two of them—and she gave a cry of pleasure. "Oh, who could have put them there?"

"Allison Foster," suggested Will; but he did not believe it.

"Pshaw! you know better," said Belle; but she was pleased with the suggestion.

"Well, then, I should say Eva Atwood. One of those two I'll be bound."

"Don't be so ridiculous," said Belle.

"Then you have found me out. Spare my blushes, my dear sister. I earned the money in my spare time. I burnt the midnight oil that you might shine in the assemblies which your beauty is so well fitted to adorn. Don't thank me, your pleasure is enough," said Will, waving his hand dramatically.

"I won't, never fear," said Belle shortly. "You couldn't keep money in your pocket long enough to buy them. Father must have sent them when he did your ten pound note."

But when Annie found on her table a book she had much desired, she went straight to Eva and hugged her enthusiastically, "I know it's you, and I thank you a thousand times." Mrs. Chester received a silver tea-pot, and Isabel a splendid doll.

Although it is true they all thought of Eva as the possible donor, all but Annie thought it was likely to have been Mr. Chester, who was a commercial traveller, and often sent home valuable presents. But who could have distributed them so cunningly?

The next day solved the mystery. Meanwhile Will packed up his books and started off.

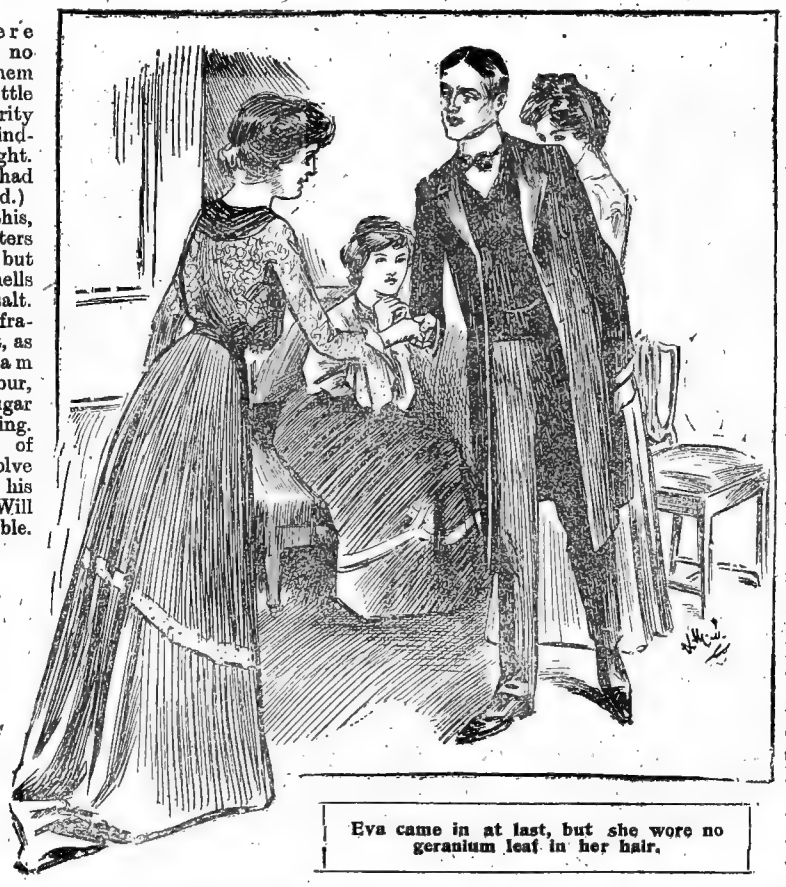
"Never mind," said he affectionately, patting his mother's face. "Maybe I'll get off with only a reprimand."

But next morning his grinning face was seen at the breakfast table and the family discovered the whole thing to have been a hoax. He had written the letter himself and fooled them most cleverly.

This was the most successful farce ever acted in the Chester family on All Fools' Day.

"But it was cruel, Will," said his mother, frowning and smiling.

"I know it. I almost relented a dozen times," said he.



Eva came in at last, but she wore no geranium leaf in her hair.

Digitized by Google

But Eva, quiet little Eva, had read and digested her letter long ere this. It never occurred to her that it was a hoax, for she could not conceive of anyone unkind enough to do such a thing. Still she was not deceived. She did not believe Allison Foster loved her, although he told her so in this letter.

"No, he does not love me, although he thinks he does; if he did——" and a blush covered her face and a tender look stole into her sweet eyes. "No, he does not. I feel something lacking in the letter. I will not wear the geranium leaf, but I will tell him why. I will write to him—that will be best."

So when Mr. Foster called, a shy little figure met him in the hall and put a letter into his hand, and then ran upstairs before anyone saw her.

Completely mystified, his hand closed over the note, and then he entered the sitting-room. Cora, Annie, Will, and Belle were all there, and at once they plunged into a merry chat; but, although Allison joined in it, his thoughts were with Eva and he wished she would enter.

She came in at last, and she wore no geranium leaf in her hair, as the girls saw at a glance. Annie looked significantly at Belle, and Cora rather enjoyed her friend's discomfiture also. Allison saw nothing of this, for he was shaking hands with Eva, holding her hand a little longer than was strictly necessary, it seemed to Belle, while he looked into her face with a new feeling in his own. Eva smiled and dropped her eyes shyly.

Later, when Allison was at home, he tore open the letter and read:

"Dear Mr. Foster,—*I was, as you fancied I should be, much surprised at receiving your letter, particularly as you have never before given me any reason to think you loved me. I think you are mistaken now. I have heard that people sometimes deceive themselves by thinking they feel more kindly than they do, and it seems as if you must be thus mistaken in the measure of your regard for me. I am quite sure, dear Mr. Foster, that, if you really loved me, my heart would tell me so. I did not wear the geranium leaf for this reason. Sincerely your friend,*

"Eva Atwood."

The sweet girl's secret was plainly told in this letter; also her unerring insight, which would not let her be deceived.

Allison was keen and shrewd. He saw at a glance that some trick had been played on the unsuspecting girl; but whom to mistrust, unless Will Chester, he did not know.

The next day he happened to meet Eva returning from the village alone. A tide of crimson swept over his own face as well as hers.

"Miss Atwood, will you let me see the letter I wrote you?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied with a surprised look.

Belle had said she wrote nearly enough like Mr. Foster to deceive Eva, but she could not deceive the young man himself. Furthermore, having received several notes from Belle, he knew her writing immediately.

"Is there anything wrong about it?" asked Eva, timidly, seeing his stern look.

"No, except that it was unsuccessful," he replied, determined that she should never know how she had been deceived. He raised his hat and passed on, comparing in his mind the beautiful, guileless face of Eva with the proud look of Belle. His love for the latter was swept to the winds by his knowledge that she had perpetrated this cruel hoax upon her cousin.

"I wonder if I was mistaken," thought Eva, as she walked on. "He looked almost as if he cared."

"She loves me, I feel sure, by her letter," said he to himself, and a glad warmth stole into his heart at the thought.

After this, Mr. Foster's visits plainly were to Eva, and in a few months he asked her to marry him, and this time she did not refuse.

Belle bitterly regretted her folly when she learnt of the engagement, for somehow she felt that her conduct had helped it forward. "I was the April Fool, not Eva," she said; but she bore the disappointment in haughty silence, and Annie and Cora forebore to mention her April joke, and to this day Eva knows nothing about it.

**Mary Hatch.**

# THE NEW - - - - - GOVERNESS.

**Telling How Mr. Fred Morrisor Found His Wife.**

"Where is Miss Gray?" asked Fred Morrison, as his sister crossed the lawn.

"Miss Gray has her duties to attend to," answered Helena. "She is putting Gerty to bed. Oh, dear, I wish I had never seen her!" Helena added, with an anxious expression.

She was still young, though she had been four years a widow; thirty years of age, in fact, and two years older than Fred, who had arrived from Canada three weeks ago.

He was tall and broad-shouldered, his face being tanned almost as dark as his fair hair and moustache.

"I hope she won't trouble you much longer," he said, as he paced the lawn by Helena's side.

"You are not going to do anything foolish?" she cried, resting a hand on his arm.

"Certainly not."

"You know what I mean, Fred. You are not going to ask Miss Gray to marry you?"

"At the first opportunity," he said, with an air of determination.

"A woman you had not seen until three weeks ago; of whom we know absolutely nothing?"

"You know she lived with Lady Tresserton for two years, anyhow," he retorted.

"Ah," said Helena, "I ought to have gone to see Lady Tresserton. I wish I had not been content with a written reference. Miss Gray certainly led me to believe she knew something about children——"

"Gerty seems immensely fond of her," Fred suggested.

"My friend, Mrs. Vereker, who happens to know a cousin of Lord Tresserton," Helena continued, "declares that Lady Tresserton has no children."

"Well, have you asked Miss Gray to explain?"

"She said she was Lady Tresserton's companion. Lord and Lady Tresserton live very unhappily. Mrs. Vereker told me that. I feel sure there's something in the background——"

"There is Miss Gray!" Fred exclaimed, as he turned at the end of the lawn.

She stepped out into the garden, looking far more like the mistress of the house than Mrs. Marston. Miss Gray was the taller by half a head, her figure was graceful and beautifully modelled, her hair of a dark reddish-brown colour, her face small and rather pale. She had a look of distinction, which caused Helena to hesitate before each order.

"Oh, what a treat to get out of the nursery," she cried

Digitized by Google

Helena stared, and then walked away.

"What induced you to enter it?" asked Fred, coming to her side.

"Beggars can't be—— You know the proverb."

"You might easily have found a more congenial occupation," he suggested.

"I desire nothing different," she said. "I am quite contented; I like your sister, and I am growing quite fond of little Gerty."

"And Gerty's uncle?" he asked, bending over her.

"You were not—you were not in the bill," she retorted.

"Still," he said, "facts have to be faced. I want you to be my wife, Winnie."

She stopped abruptly.

"Don't call me that," she said.

"I want you to give me the right to call you Winnie always. I want you to share my life. Tell me you love me," he urged. "Your eyes have betrayed you already."

"There would be something else to tell you first," she murmured.

"Then tell me, and have done with it."

"Not now," she answered.

"Then let me take you on trust," he persisted. "You admit that you love me?"

"I did not intend to admit it," she said, with a vivid smile.

"Now you have said it," he cried. "Nothing shall keep you from me now. Tell me, at least, that nothing need," he pleaded.

"I—I don't know," she answered. "Some men might think it an obstacle. I cannot tell whether you are one of them." And, turning away quickly, she re-entered the house.

The next day she seemed to avoid him, devoting herself more than usual to Gerty. Fred found no opportunity to speak to her alone.

"Mrs. Vereker called this afternoon, Miss Gray," said Mrs. Marston, in the drawing-room after dinner. "Did you know that Lady Tresserton had left her husband? It must have been very soon after you left Armestead Square. Lord Tresserton is employing detectives to find her."

"I don't imagine they are very likely to succeed," answered Miss Gray. And, rising abruptly, she bade Helena and Fred good night.

* * * * *

The following afternoon Gerty was playing with her dolls on the lawn beneath the walnut-tree, and Miss Gray was sewing as she leant back in a garden-chair.

"Am I disturbing you?" asked Fred, coming to her side.

"It is pleasant out here," she said. "Won't you sit down?"

"When will you enter upon this unnecessary explanation?"

"It is by no means unnecessary——"

"I am impatient to tell Helena you have promised to be my wife," said Fred.

"I haven't promised to be your wife," she expostulated.

"You know," he muttered, "you rather test one's patience."

"Perhaps you shall have your reward at last," she answered, "if you really wish for it."

As she spoke, a servant came from a side door.

"Please, Miss, Mrs. Marston wants you in the drawing-room," she said.

Rising, Miss Gray accompanied the girl indoors.

Gerty began to engross Fred's attention, until about ten minutes later Helena entered the garden.

"I can't understand it," she said. "I sent Harriet for Miss Gray. On her way to the house the girl told her a man was waiting to see her. Miss Gray asked what he was like and, instead of going to him in the drawing-room, she ran upstairs, put on her hat, and left the house. I want you to come with me to tell him."

Not a little mystified, Fred accompanied Helena to the drawing-room, where he saw a tall, dissipated-looking man of forty.

"I am sorry to say Miss Gray has gone——" Helena began; but the visitor interrupted her.

"Did she know I was here?"

"The servant," said Fred, "told her a gentleman was waiting, and described you to Miss Gray."

"She is my wife—Lady Tresserton!"

"Good Heavens!" muttered Fred.

"My wife left my house," Lord Tresserton explained indignantly, "a month ago. I employed a detective, and he found the cabman who drove her to the railway station. He succeeded in tracing her here."

"Lady Tresserton has had time to catch the train?" he asked.

"Easily," Helena answered.

"And the next?"

"There is no other for an hour."

Muttering an imprecation, Lord Tresserton left the room.

"I should not like to be his wife," cried Helena. "Poor old Fred!" she murmured. "How blind you were!"

That evening Fred went to the railway station and spoke to the station-master. He learnt that Lady Tresserton, as he now thought of her, had caught the London train, but had first made hurried inquiries concerning the place to take ship for New York. Also, she had asked whether she could book through to Liverpool. Lord Tresserton had been told all this, and there could be little doubt that both had travelled to the Mersey.

* * * * *

Miss Gray's name was not mentioned during the next few days.

As they passed a great change came over Fred. His face looked haggard and worn, his manner was taciturn and irritable.

About a week later Helena went to London for the day, and Fred was smoking when the library door opened.

"Miss Gray to see you, sir; she is in the drawing-room."

A few hurried strides took him across the hall. She was standing in the middle of the room, and Fred stopped as if he had seen a ghost.

"I assumed you were on your way to America," he blurted out.

"It is true I took my passage," she said. "You see I have come back to you instead."

"But your—your husband——"

"I have not got one yet," she said, with a smile; "perhaps I never shall have one."

"Lord Tresserton——"

"My brother-in-law. He married my sister Winifred. I lived with her for two years—she refused to stay with her husband unless I did so. We had very little money; so that we could not leave Armestead Square until I found a home. We sent the servants out one day and called a cab," she explained. "The trunk containing my clothes has Winnie's—Lady Tresserton's—initials on it. My box held her things. I entered the cab; my sister walked away. At the station I sent my box, containing her clothes, to a cottage a mile from here. With the other I travelled to the house. I stuck a label over the initials—you see they had done their work."

"Thrown Tresserton off the scent?" Fred queried.

"I imagined," she continued, "Lord Tresserton would succeed in tracing the cabman, whom I thought would describe the box. In the event of his pursuing me here, I thought I might be able to lead him further astray. I asked absurd questions at the station to lead him to think I intended sailing to New York. I travelled to Liverpool the same night, and took a passage by the *Sioux*, a slow boat on the point of starting. I guessed Lord Tresserton would follow on by the next, and in fact I was on the quay when he went aboard the following day. I have taken my sister away, "and on his return I don't fancy he will discover her. Besides, she will take steps to protect herself legally now," she continued. "I am going back to Winnie. I don't think your sister will want me any more."

"But I want you, Winnie!" cried Fred.

"My name is Maud," she quietly corrected.

**Stanley Hammond.**

Digitized by Google

# TRUE FRIEND OR FALSE?

**An Entrancing Story, Telling How the Fates Were Kind.**

"Of course, as sub-manager, your salary will begin at £300," said the senior partner, "and that is a pleasant item. On the other hand, you might not care to go to Australia?"

"I shall be very pleased to go there," said the younger man, almost bitterly, "and the sooner I go the better I shall like it."

"A week from to-day?"

"To-morrow, if you wish, sir."

The above conversation had taken place two years ago, and now Humphrey Wallis was home again in England, having been transferred back to headquarters at his own request.

The time he had spent in Australia had not had the desired effect, for he was slow to change. He went out loving Enid Glynn with all his heart, although hopelessly, and now—after two years of absence——

He shrugged his shoulders. If only he could forget as other people seemed to do so easily.

As he was walking across London towards Euston Station, he saw in front of him an old Manchester friend, who was also a cousin of Miss Glynn.

Probably the latter consideration was uppermost in Humphrey's mind as he stepped forward and saluted his friend with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

Egerton Lee turned swiftly, and stared, white-faced and trembling, at his former friend.

"Hope I didn't startle you!" said the latter apologetically. But his remark was wasted, for the other man fled as though for his life. Humphrey stared after him in absolute amazement, without attempting to follow him.

Then a whimsical explanation of his old friend's terror occurred to him, which he accepted at once.

"Poor beggar, looked at me as though I had been a ghost come back to life," he thought; "perhaps that's what he thinks, for I haven't written to a soul in this country since I left it."

He arrived in Manchester some four hours later. One of the first people he met on coming out of the station was a former acquaintance, to whom he extended his hand with a certain amount of difference. But this time there was no terror, only a hearty greeting and a crowd of questions.

"And Lee—Egerton Lee?" said Humphrey presently. The other man's face became serious at once.

"Ah, yes," he answered; "you heard about it, then?"

"Heard about what?"

"He died, you know, a few months ago."

Humphrey stared in amazement, unable to speak for the moment.

"A very sad case," continued his acquaintance. "You know that cousin of his who was so delicate?"

"Miss Glynn!"

"No, no. Walter Lee—quite a young fellow; been ill off and on for years. Well, he became worse, and Egerton, who was always rather quixotic, gave up his situation and took him away to Blackpool. His first idea had been to send the lad alone, but he wouldn't go that way, so they went together. Egerton had had a little legacy, thirty shillings a week or so, and he drew slightly on his principal each week, so as to make up enough to keep them comfortably."

"But it was Walter who was ill."

"Exactly; yet it was Egerton who died, and they had been in Blackpool three months. That was what surprised everybody. They've no relations here except Miss Glynn, and even she was not notified of the funeral. Merely a short note when all was over, to tell her of the death, and that she was entitled to this money—about £2,000."

"And where did Walter go?" said Humphrey. "Did you never hear how Egerton died?"

"Not a word. Nobody even knows where Walter is. Perhaps he was jealous because the money went to Miss Glynn instead of to himself. But I must be off now. Good-bye, old man!"

And away he went, leaving Humphrey more puzzled than before.

"I can't leave the matter at this stage," thought the latter. "There's some mystery, and it must be cleared up. I'm quite certain it was Egerton I met in London; and, anyhow, nobody could confuse him with Walter.

"And Enid has received a legacy, and is further out of my reach than ever!"

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Enid Glynn was not obtaining much pleasure from her money, although it had certainly made a considerable difference to her. For one thing, it had removed the necessity to work for her living, and, as she had never been particularly strong, the change was very welcome on this account alone, and should have made her life happy.

But happiness is entirely relative, and is much more concerned with such matters as the heart and the mind than mere possession of money. And when the heart is grieving, all the legacies in the world cannot cure it.

So Enid found, and her grief was for Egerton Lee. Some little comfort she took from the knowledge that he had loved her, even though he had never said so. But she reproached herself for not having encouraged him to speak when he had obviously wished to do so. And now it was too late. He had died without knowing that she loved him, in a strange house, with only one, who was himself an invalid, to attend to him.

How sudden it had been! Everybody knew that Walter Lee was delicate, and that the end of his life was only a matter of a very few years, or possibly months. But that he should take a turn for the better and be able to leave his bed and even resume business whilst Egerton, the very pattern of

Digitized by Google

health, should be stricken down with the same dreadful complaint and carried to his grave in a few weeks, this was extraordinary.

She had known nothing of this until about a week after Egerton's death. Then, and then only, she received a short note from Walter, saying that his cousin was dead and that she succeeded to the £2,000 in accordance with the terms of their grandfather's will.

He gave her the address of the lawyers who would arrange the matter, and said that, as for himself, having to some extent recovered his health, he was going to the south of England, where he intended to obtain work and settle down.

Out of love comes jealousy, and there were times when Enid, thinking over the circumstances, felt vague suspicions against Walter Lee. The love that hungered in her heart whispered that there had been foul play; that Walter had had some interest in getting rid of his cousin.

The suspicion was strengthened by the fact that Egerton's watch and rings had disappeared, and that his own savings, apart from the £2,000, had been withdrawn from the bank only a few days before his death. And there were other circumstances. Why should Walter disappear so mysteriously?

She was thinking these things over for the thousandth time when there came a sudden ringing at the front-door bell. The sound jangled hideously upon her over-wrought nerves, making thought impossible, and she threw herself upon the sofa, holding her hands over her ears. The landlady entered the room.

"There's a gentleman downstairs would like to see you, Miss Glynn."

"To see me?"

"Yes; Mr. Wallis."

A faint flush crept over Enid's face. She had heard how hardly Humphrey had taken his rejection, and of his voyage to Australia. The present visit proved, at any rate, that he had not forgotten her. But if he had come—she shook her head at the idea that occurred to her, and made her way to the drawing-room.

The usual greetings were exchanged with a certain amount of awkwardness on both sides, and then Humphrey plunged immediately into his subject.

"If you will allow me to refer to a painful subject," he began.

She bowed resignedly, and made up her mind to give him a very definite *no* this time. It was not that she disliked Humphrey; far from it, but there was only room for one in her heart.

"I want to speak about poor Egerton Lee," he said.

"About Egerton Lee?" This was not at all what she had expected to hear, but it was very welcome, nevertheless.

"Yes; I have just heard of his death; it was very sudden."

"It was worse than sudden," she cried piteously. "It was suspicious!"

It was Humphrey's turn to stare now.

"He was my cousin," she explained hurriedly; "and excepting Walter, the only relative I had in the world. I never liked Walter. Where has he gone to? And where is Egerton's watch, and his rings and his money—his own money? Egerton was strong and well when he called here before he went to Blackpool, and yet we hear a few weeks later that he is dead. And the other one disappears and daren't show himself!"

"I suppose it was all straightforward," he answered slowly. "And, besides, I understood you received your grandfather's legacy, so that goes to disprove any suspicions of foul play. But Egerton and I were old friends, and if you don't mind giving me the address at Blackpool, Enid, I thought of going there for a day or two to get to know how the poor fellow died."

"I don't know the address. Walter simply headed his letter 'Blackpool,' and that was all. If I'd known, I might have gone myself."

"It doesn't matter much. They are bound to have registered the death, and I can get to know all I want from that."

"And you will let me know?"

"Yes, I will call here and tell you."

"If you could satisfy me that he was not harmed, and that everything was right and straightforward, I could become more reconciled. But these doubts and suspicions are wearing my life away."

"And if, when I return, I can assure you of that?"

"If you could——"

"I came here to-day with another purpose in addition to wanting to know something about Egerton. It's two years since we parted, Enid, and I've been hoping sometimes against hope that you might have changed your mind about what I asked you. If you only knew how much it means to me! And you admitted then that you liked me as well as any of the others."

"I did, and I like you still," she said.

"Then say 'Yes' to me, Enid, and come away from these dreary lodgings to a home of our own. Just think how happy we should be together!"

She sprang to her feet with a new light flashing from her eyes, walked quickly across the room, and then turned suddenly to him as though she had at last made up her mind.

"I like you very well, indeed, Humphrey, but all my heart and soul seem bound up now in the fate of my poor cousin."

"In his fate? But you don't think he is alive?" he cried.

"I know he's dead—I've no doubt about that! The lawyers must have seen the death certificate before they transferred that money to me. But I want to know how he died, and if there was any foul play."

"And if I find out all about that, if I find the house at which he dies, and get to know the whole of the circumstances so as to satisfy you one way or the other?"

"Ah, if you could only set my mind at rest about that!"

"Would you say 'Yes' to my question, Enid?"

"I would say—whatever you wished!"

But as he advanced towards her she broke away and fled from the room. And as he walked out of the house, Humphrey resolved upon a dishonourable action for the first time in his life. He would go to Blackpool and make inquiry there, but to what extent he would communicate the result to Enid, that was another matter.

* * * * *

His suspicions as to the fate of Egerton Lee were confirmed with startling promptness the next day. He travelled to Blackpool by an early morning train and found his way at once to the Registry Office, where he obtained a copy of the certificate of Egerton's death.

His next call was upon the doctor who had signed the certificate, from whom he begged as an old friend of the dead man, some particulars as to the illness of the latter. The doctor was interested as soon as he mentioned the name.

"I will tell you what I can with pleasure," he said cordially, "and the case you mention has a particular interest for me, as I nearly made a most extraordinary mistake in writing out the certificate. Just imagine, my dear sir; here were two cousins. Walter Lee, poor

Digitized by Google

fellow, was doomed long before he came to Blackpool. I knew he wouldn't live."

"Walter Lee! You knew he couldn't live!" cried Humphrey.

"Yes—no, my dear sir, a thousand pardons; I should have said Egerton, not Walter. Walter was the healthy one — a particularly healthy young fellow, in fact. Well, I attended Mr. Egerton for a good many weeks, and all that time I addressed him and thought of him as Mr. Walter. And naturally when the poor fellow died, I filled in the certificate with the name of Walter. The other young man turned quite pale when he read it, and begged of me to alter it immediately; said it might be unlucky, and I don't know what else! He explained that there had been a misunderstanding as to their names."

"And you altered it?"

"My dear sir, I would rather have written a thousand certificates than have hurt his feelings in the way I did. It was only superstition, but superstition is very human. Oh, yes, I altered it as quickly as I possibly could."

Humphrey thanked him and then hastened away. He had made up his mind already to make his way straight to London and endeavour to trace Egerton there. The apparent difficulties of his task did not daunt him, for he knew there were very few firms in the whole of England engaged in the business to which Egerton had been trained.

Humphrey left Blackpool that evening, and walked out of Euston Station early next morning. A hurried breakfast, five minutes with the directory, and he set out with three addresses, at one of which he was almost certain to find the man he sought.

He had decided to see Egerton in order to learn his reason for disappearing. Having learnt that, he could shape his course accordingly, for he should know what tale to tell to Enid and how far it would be safe to deceive her. Upon one thing he was quite determined, and that was to marry Enid Glynn, whether by truth or falsehood. His love had become a passion, and was already blunting his sense of honour.

When he called upon the second of the three firms he was told that Walter, not Egerton Lee, had been engaged with them, but had resigned rather suddenly a few days previously. However, they gave his private address to Humphrey, and thither he made his way.

The landlady had a Mr. Walter Lee staying at her house. He was leaving London, and was upstairs at that moment packing his trunk. If the gentleman would give her his name.

But Humphrey slipped a half crown into her shrivelled old palm, and begged her to tell him where the room was, which she did at once.

He opened the door with considerable nervousness. A man who was stooping over a trunk stood up suddenly, and stared at Humphrey as though he saw a ghost.

"You! You've followed me!"

"Yes, I have," said Humphrey doggedly. "You didn't suppose I'd let an old friend go under in this fashion, especially not if I could help him?"

"And who knows you are here?"

"Nobody. Not a soul, Egerton."

The other man breathed a sigh of relief. "What do you want to know?" he said next moment.

"I want to know why you died," answered Humphrey smiling nervously. "Come along, old chap, you surely can trust me not to give the show away, whatever your game may be."

"Yes, I trust you," said Egerton slowly. "And besides, the tale concerns you to some extent. I had the good fortune, Humphrey, to have a little money left to me, and the evil fortune to fall in love with a girl who didn't care twopence about me. In fact, I'm almost certain you are the favourite suitor now, whatever you may have been before, and therefore I don't hesitate to mention her name to you."

"Miss Glynn?"

"Yes, Enid Glynn. Well, I had often felt what a shame it was that I should have the use of that £2,000 whilst she—poor, delicate little woman—had to work so hard for her living. Whilst I was nursing my cousin Walter, I suddenly saw a way out of the difficulty. It was risky, especially with the Doctor, but everything turned out well. And now I've turned to work again, and feel better for it, and she has the money, and will put it to good use, whether she marries or not.'

"So you gave up all your hopes——"

"I had none to give up. She never cared for me."

"But you cared?"

"Yes, I cared for her, and so I did what I could to make her happy."

Humphrey stood silent. He knew now why Enid had refused him, and he knew why the legacy had brought little or no happiness to her life. With him lay the power, by half a dozen words, to bring these two together and lead them to their life's happiness. But those half dozen words he would never speak. Friend, honour, everything might go, but he could not speak the words that would separate him from Enid Glynn.

He left Egerton soon after. The faithful self-sacrifice of the latter made Humphrey despise himself. He shook hands with the friend whom he meant to betray, and ran from the room as though he were a thief. Even at the door he turned, half resolved to explain everything. But Egerton came forward, and pushed him bodily from the room.

"You go to your happiness, to Enid," he said wistfully; "for myself, I'm a superfluity, so the best thing I can do is to efface myself again."

Humphrey hurried down the stairs without another word. Out of the house, away, anywhere. And all the time he fought blindly, savagely, against every instinct and prompting of his better self.

That night he spent in a hotel in Tottenham Court Road, but he did not sleep. All through the weary hours he sat, thinking silently in the darkness, combating every argument that his sense of honour, dying hard, suggested. And in the morning, when he came downstairs, his heart was as hard as a rock towards Egerton, even though his mad passion for Enid blazed more fiercely than ever.

An hour later he took his seat in the Manchester express, due to leave Euston at ten o'clock. By this time the strain of the previous night was beginning to tell upon him, and he fell into an uneasy sleep. Other people got into the carriage, one in particular, who was closely muffled up, and who smiled, though rather sadly, as he took his seat beside Humphrey.

Meanwhile the latter was passing through a nightmare of remorse. He turned uneasily, groaned, clenched his fists and loosened them as suddenly, and then at last a fierce ejaculation broke from his lips, and he opened his eyes and stared in wild terror at the calm, serious face of Egerton Lee.

A sudden impulse came over Humphrey to tell the whole tale then and there. But simultaneously he thought of the look that Enid had given to him two days before—a look that was all kindness and might so easily be changed into love.

"Are you coming to Manchester after all?" he said coldly, "coming to claim your legacy back again?"

Digitized by Google

"No, not quite that," said Egerton, "but I'm going to ask a favour from you."

"What is it?"

"I intend to leave England altogether and strike out afresh in the Colonies, but before going I thought if I could see Enid once, just for a moment——"

"It's quite impossible," said Humphrey harshly. "She thinks you are dead."

"No, you don't understand my plan. I didn't mean to speak to her or even to let her see me or know of my presence."

"What then?"

"I thought of driving straight to a hotel, and staying there until after it was dark. Then, with my face well covered, I might come to the street where she lives; and I thought perhaps you, who have so much influence with her, would call and persuade her to come out for a walk."

"And if I do?" said Humphrey doggedly.

"I shall see her as she passes."

"You swear not to make yourself known to her in any way."

"I swear."

"Then I agree. I'll call at the house where she is staying about seven o'clock this evening."

"And you think she will come out?"

"Yes, I think so. I'll send a wire to say I've discovered something in regard to a matter she asked me to inquire about, and that I'll call to take her out about seven."

Egerton seized his friend's hand and shook it eagerly. "You're a real friend," he said, "in all the lonely days to come I shall think of you the next after Enid."

"Don't; you hurt my hand," said Humphrey roughly, and drew it away.

* * * * * * *

The landlady showed Humphrey straight into the drawing-room where Enid was waiting for him. She advanced eagerly, holding out her hand in welcome.

"How cold you are!" she cried, "and your face is pale! What is the matter?"

"It's nothing. I've been worried a great deal."

"I'm sorry," she said gravely. "I suppose it is for somebody else, as usual, Humphrey. I remember in the old days how generous you were, and how you looked after all your friends."

"I always tried to be faithful to my friends," he said, speaking slowly and almost hoarsely. "Do you mind coming out for a stroll while I tell you what I have discovered?"

"About Egerton?" she cried, "but tell me one thing before we go any further," and she came closer and looked up at him appealingly. "There has been no foul play. You have not found out anything of that sort?"

"No, nothing of that sort," he said, and then, with sudden fierceness, "And when I have told you, you promised——"

"I will marry you," she said simply. "I promised, and I will keep my word. We both loved Egerton, did we not, Humphrey?"

"Why do you keep mentioning his name?" he cried. "Let the dead be quiet in their graves; it is ungenerous to keep reminding me."

She looked at him in astonishment, but seeing how ill he looked—his face was ghastly pale—she forebore to speak, but ran out of the room and put on her hat and jacket. When she opened the door again Humphrey was standing where she had left him, staring stonily before him. He followed her from the room without a word and out of the house. And as they walked beneath the light of the lamp a man, who was standing at the opposite side of the street, leant forward and stared at the slender figure of the girl as a lost soul might stare at the barred gates of Heaven.

Meanwhile Enid and Humphrey walked along in utter silence for several minutes, until at last she spoke.

"You are not well," she said softly.

"No, I am not. And then with a sudden burst of passion that swept all the barriers of his restraint, "I don't deserve to be well," he said bitterly. "I am a thief and a liar and a false friend; but, before Heaven, it shall finish now. But before I tell you, Enid, promise to look kindly upon me. If I had betrayed my friend and stolen his happiness it would have been for love of you. Because I could not bear to give you up, even though I knew you loved him and not me."

Some faint glimmering of the truth must have reached her, for she stood still in the dark and deserted street, and seized his arm, trembling piteously, and begged to know what he had to tell.

"You loved Egerton?" he said.

"I did; I do now," she answered, with a sudden light springing in her eyes and making her face beautiful in the moonlight. "I have never deceived you about that, Humphrey."

"And if he were still alive?"

"If he were? Is he alive?" she whispered. "Is that what you have discovered?"

He nodded his head silently. "He is in the street we have just left," he said a moment later.

"And you? You have sacrificed yourself for your friend and for me and you ask for forgiveness!" she cried, her eyes shining.

"I ask for forgiveness," he repeated.

"Then I grant it to you," she said earnestly, and made him stoop and kissed him. "I don't know how it has all come about, but I know that we owe our life's happiness to you, and to you alone."

And thus they parted, and went their different ways in life Humphrey walked slowly on through the darkness, and Enid turned to meet Egerton, who was trying to avoid her. But when she called he came slowly and hesitatingly towards her, not knowing what happiness the Fates had reserved for him.

**Wal Frank.**

"Is that young man gone, Matilda?" cried her father from the top of the stairs. "Oh, awfully!" returned Matilda.

He: "What's a fellow to do when a girl breaks his heart?" She: "Get a new one." He: "A new what?" She: "A new girl."

"Jack told me last night that he had given me his heart." "Well, it's damaged goods. He told me last week that I had broken it."

He: "I understand that you are to be congratulated?" She: "No; the engagement is broken off." He: "That is what I heard."

"Confound the printers!" "What's the matter?" "Why, I wrote a sonnet to my fiancée's 'Wee Foot,' and they've printed it 'Web Foot.'"

"Did your wife listen to your excuses for coming home so late last night?" "Oh, yes; she listened to me, and then——" "Then what?" "I listened to her—for four hours."

"The summer will soon be here again, Mr. Hardfact—summer, with its murmuring streams, blossoming flowers, and sweet birds on the wing!" "One moment, Miss Gushly! There is no bird on the wing. The wing is on the bird!"

Maud: "What do you do when a man persists in asking for a dance and you don't care to dance with him?" Marie: "Tell him my card is full." Maud: "But supposing it isn't, and he still persists?" Marie: "Then I insist that it is, and let him see that it isn't."

"I think I'm making some headway," said the persistent lover, who is not in favour with her father. "But I thought the old gentleman kicked you out whenever he found you at the house?" "He does; but I have noticed that he is not kicking nearly so hard of late. I feel sure that he is gradually relenting."

Digitized by Google

# A Superstitious Wife.

## Relating How She Was Cured.

Before Maud and I were married, her penchant for horseshoes and four-leaved clovers did not impress me as an indication of anything more serious than the harmless romanticism of innocent maidenhood. I did not then realise what it is to have superstition in the family. Even later, when she implored me to wear my left sock wrong side out for luck, I regarded it only as the sign of affectionate solicitude for my welfare, which would evaporate after the honeymoon. I noticed that she was very particular about these things.

She thought that it was flying in the face of Providence to leave a room by a different door from that by which she had entered. This was a very uncomfortable superstition in our flat, because the rooms were strung along in a line, so that it was practically impossible to pass from our drawing-room to the dining-room without going through a couple of bedrooms. Maud was in a fearful dilemma about this at first. I suggested that she should let herself out of the front window by a rope, walk round the house, and climb into the back window on the fire-escape. She seemed to be pained by the levity of this advice, and I left her in tears. When I returned she was radiant with hope.

"If you go out of the second door backwards it reverses the charm and gives you good luck," she said, and she stuck to it even after she had fallen over a door-mat and driven a hairpin into the back of her head in her efforts to propitiate the Fates. I couldn't see much luck in that, but she called my attention to the fact that if she had gone out in the usual way she might have driven the hairpin into her nose, which would have been much worse.

At first she was the only victim of her vagaries, but later they began to get in their work on me. She sat up late one night to put a genuine, hand-painted, four-leaved clover about two feet in diameter on the back of my coat, and she was so nervous about it that she painted it on the outside instead of on the lining. It took a quart of benzine to bring back peace to our household.

One day I came home and found her seated behind her sewing-table, which was covered with cards. As soon as she saw me she sprang to her feet with her countenance full of hysteria. She pointed her finger at me with a gesture of desair.

"Howard, you have been followed by a dark woman. Who is she? Don't attempt to deceive me!"

"My dear, I can conceal nothing from you," I replied. "She is the woman who attends to our laundry. She met me at the door with a demand for six pounds, and I told her to call again in the summer."

I never saw anybody so relieved as Maud was.

"I knew the cards couldn't be wrong," she said. "I've just got a book that tells all about them. Now I'm going to tell your fortune."

She made me cut the pack and then she began to deal out the cards.

"A black knave; that's you," she said.

"Thanks, awfully," said I.

"That only means a young man who is of dark complexion," she explained. "There's a light queen following him. That's I, of course. Isn't it nice? The ace of spades is the next one! Oh, Howard, that means that I'm going to die," and she began to cry.

"Turn over the next one and let's see about the inquest," I said, trying to pass the thing off with a joke.

"The ten of hearts," she sobbed. "That means a laugh and a merry time. Oh, Howard, to think that you should go off and enjoy yourself after I'm dead! You horrid, horrid thing!"

"But, my dear, I should cry my eyes out. There must be a misdeal here somewhere; it can't be otherwise."

"No," she moaned, "and the very next card is the nine of clubs, which means that whatever you're told is sure to come true. I am as good as dead, and you will be happy."

"Light of my existence——"

"Don't speak to me. Would you deceive a woman who has only a few days to live?"

In desperation I turned the next card. It was the two of diamonds. Maud was looking over the top of her handkerchief. I saw her face brighten.

"That's the best money card in the pack," she said. "We're going to be rich before I die."

"Then cheer up, my dear. You must make up your mind to stay by me until I'm rich."

After this there were no more tears for a while. I did not transgress the rules of Fate again that evening except by picking up a pin the wrong end first. Maud was much frightened at the prospect of bad luck, but I explained that I had picked up the pin off the bedroom carpet with the bottom of my bare foot, and that under the circumstances it is nearly impossible to get at anything but the business end of a pin.

Day by day Maud grew worse, until finally I decided to have some doctors come to see whether some of her numerous superstitions had not cast a shadow over her once brilliant intellect. Of course, I didn't let her know about it. I said that some friends would call, and she must entertain them. The experts arrived about three o'clock one afternoon. I did not get there till 4.30. When I came in a curious scene met my gaze. Maud was standing behind her table telling fortunes, and the old medical fossils were so interested that they had forgotten what they came for, and did not even notice my entrance. I caught a confused sound of voices. "Did you say I was going to be pursued by a blonde?" "Gracious me! Brunette? Thank Heaven! That bars my wife out."

When they saw me there was confusion, and the doctors hurriedly took their leave. Maud burst out laughing.

"The old sillies!" she said. "I made them believe that all the girls in town were running after them. They swallowed it all. I never realised before how absurd cards were."

"And you'll give up telling fortunes?" I gasped.

"Yes; I don't believe in cards any more. These men have cured me."

"Good!" I murmured under my breath, "they've broken their professional records."

"And you won't be superstitious any more?" I said aloud.

"Never again," she promised. "I'll begin to-day. Goodness, no; I can't begin to-day. It's Friday. And to-morrow is the 13th of the month. Oh, dear, I'll have to wait. But the first good lucky day, when the sun doesn't rise in a cloud, and I get out of bed with my right foot first, I will renounce superstition for ever—if I haven't a bad-luck dream during the night."

**Charles Watson.**

Digitized by Google

# Outwitted.

## The Tale of a Lawyer's Narrow Escape.

"Are you a lawyer, sir?"

I started violently at the words, for I had been sitting for some time at my desk, plunged in a fit of the deepest thought, and had not heard anyone enter the office.

It was a warm summer's evening, and I had left the windows and doors open, for the sake of the refreshing draught. Rising from my seat, and turning up the gas-jet on the table, I turned and surveyed my interlocutor, who proved to be none other than a well-dressed, rather good-looking man of forty or thereabouts, of medium height, and possessed of a pair of small, piercing eyes, which returned my gaze unflinchingly.

"I am Mr. Avery, the junior partner of the firm, as you might have seen, had you taken the trouble to read the sign upon the door," I replied shortly; for I was in no wise pleased with his interruption upon my reveries.

"True," he answered courteously; "but the door was open, and the hall unlighted. I require your services for a short time," he resumed, seating himself, "provided you are disengaged for to-night."

"*Professionally* I am at your disposal for the evening," I answered.

"Ah, your remark reminds me of what I ought to do," he said laughingly, taking out his pocket-book and laying four five-pound notes on the table. But I waved my hand impatiently, informing him that no payment was necessary until after consultation, and requested him to proceed to business.

"The business to which I referred," he continued, replacing the money, and fixing his keen, black eyes upon my face, "will require your services until late in the night, if not until to-morrow morning. My niece, who resides some miles away, is dangerously ill, and, her recovery being extremely doubtful, she desires to make her will. For this purpose, I have applied to you, promising you, should you accede to my request, any fee you may demand."

I communed with myself for a few moments, eyed the man suspiciously, and then asked the distance to the young lady's residence, and the mode of conveyance thither.

"About ten miles," he responded, handing me his card, on which I read, "Martin Jackson, Castletown, Surrey." "As a train does not leave for some hours yet, I have provided a carriage and driver, which is awaiting us in the street. May I consider your services as engaged?"

I responded that he might, and a few moments sufficed to find us ensconced in a closed carriage.

The more populous portion of the town was soon passed, my companion, meantime, enlightening me with an account of his niece's illness, and previous history. I was a young man, and my nervousness and suspicions of the man beside me may be excused, when his evident anxiety in employing myself, an inexperienced lawyer, are considered. His story, too, did not sound consistent in all respects, for he spoke of his niece, Miss Blanche Pickering, as being, at times, subject to short fits of insanity. I, therefore, was prepared to find something mysterious on my arrival at our destination—which occurred shortly—in a thick grove of oak trees.

When the carriage stopped, it was in front of a large, dark-looking stone building, standing a short distance back from the road, and surrounded by tall trees. A feeble light flickered in a single window at the side of the house, and a few dim rays shone through the lower-storey window.

One thing struck me as rather curious as I walked up the gravel walk to the mansion, and tended to arouse my suspicions still more. The man Jackson dismissed the carriage, after paying the driver, with a few low, whispered words, the import of which I was unable to ascertain, and the carriage turned round sharply. I said nothing, however, but, shifting my revolver into a more convenient position in my inner pocket, entered the house with my companion, who unlocked the door with a latch-key, and was ushered into the drawing-room, which was poorly lighted by a hanging-lamp.

Having seen me seated at a table, on which were spread refreshments, Jackson left me, for a short time, and, returning shortly with a large, well-built man, whom he introduced as Mr. Cooper, took a seat beside me, his companion following his example, and, pouring out some wine, requested me to join them, which I courteously refused, on the plea of being a teetotaler. After a few moments of conversation I was again left alone, and, lighting a cigar, waited patiently my summons to actual business.

The door was opened a short time after, and by request of Cooper, I followed him up the staircase to the gloomy hall above, then into a room, where was seated my first applicant by the side of a bed, apparently in conversation with someone reclining there.

The room was a luxurious one, and appeared more so for the great contrast it presented to what other portions of the house I had seen. The rich carving, the heavy tapestry, and general appearance of the surroundings, bespoke the wealth of the possessor, whoever that person might be. Seating myself at a small table drawn up near the bed, with Jackson seated in his former position, and Cooper withdrawn to the other end of the apartment, reclining on a lounge and apparently indifferent to all that was to transpire, I awaited further developments, taking one look at the face of the occupant of the bed.

It was no wonder that I gazed long and earnestly at the countenance of the woman who reclined there. A more perfect face I had never seen—pale and with an expression of care and pain, it might have been, yet there was no trace of illness or disease, and as my eye wandered from those beautiful features, the sad yet sweetly smiling eyes, down to the plump white hand which rested in the large brown one of Jackson's, I felt that there was some mystery in the case, and that he had been untruthful in his revelations. Suddenly the man rose, dropping the lady's hand, drew up a chair opposite to my own, and with an impatient, uneasy exclamation, brought my investigation to an end.

"You will draw out the ordinary formula of a testament," he said, giving the young girl a close, scrutinising look, in which I could detect a warning expression, "writing as I dictate (Miss Pickering having acquainted me with her

Digitized by Google

destined disposal of her property), and allowing her to acquiesce when it is finished. I suppose her affirmation will be all that is necessary ? "

I was somewhat surprised at the strangeness of the request, but replied :

" Certainly, if I am confident that she is *compos mentis*, and she is too ill to dictate herself."

Here a slight exclamation broke from the lips of the occupant of the bed, as if about to frame a word or sentence, but she was checked by Jackson, who, with a threatening scowl, evidently not meant for my observation, said :

" Do not exert yourself, my dear niece ; I will do all that is necessary," and then, as I drew the writing material before me, he quickly leant over towards her, and hissed in her ear : " Remember—be careful ! " with such emphasis as to cause her to sink, pale and trembling, back among the pillows of the bed.

A half-hour elapsed, and the will had been completed. All Blanche Pickering's property, personal and real, was to be divided between the man Jackson and his son Henry, with the exception of a few small legacies. Then I read it, and after propounding the few necessary interrogatories to the legator, which were answered in a low, trembling affirmative, I requested her to sign it.

Drawing my chair up to her side, with the paper and pen in my hand, I waited for her to obey my request—intimating to Jackson that it would be as well to have Cooper as a witness.

The latter individual had evidently fallen asleep, for a call to him not bringing him to the bedside, Jackson rose and walked to where his companion lay.

At this moment, and with the rapidity of light, the girl's hand caught my own, and leaning my head downwards, so that I could listen to what she might desire to say, I heard her whisper, in passionate, beseeching words :

" I am forced to this ! They intend to kill me ! For Heaven's sake, help me ! "

Then she sank back, and before Jackson had been able to observe us, we had both resumed our former relative positions.

At last the will had been signed, witnessed, and sealed, and, hat in hand, I stood at the table, awaiting my client's further pleasure, as unconsciously as if I had not the idea in my mind of returning before morning, and that, too, with the police.

Mr. Jackson handed me some bank-notes, shook hands with me warmly, and then requested Cooper to show me to the door. As I left the room, I cast an encouraging glance at Miss Pickering, which did not escape the notice of the lynx-eyed guardian, for he looked me sharply in the face as if to detect some sign of recognition there.

Then I followed my servitor down the stairs, listened to his untruthful regrets that the carriage must have returned to the house, as agreed upon, and then gone to the town, declined his offer to remain for the night, and having been directed on my road, stood once more in the open air.

My first thought was to make all haste to the town, and, on the slight evidence of foul play I had, to obtain justice for the young girl.

The idea was immediately discarded, for, as I was about to start out, a wild scream of terror assailed my ears.

In a moment I was again up the steps, and turning the knob of the door in an ineffectual attempt to gain admittance.

I was about to attempt to force an entrance through the window, when the door was flung suddenly open, and the man Cooper stood before me.

He saw me at once, and, with an oath, struck at me with his clenched fist. Evading the blow, I whipped out my revolver, and striking him with the butt end, knocked him senseless to the ground.

I was again about to turn and enter, when the form of Jackson dashed down the staircase, through the open door, and I felt myself in his grasp.

I saw at once that he was unarmed, and, raising my pistol, fired ; but the shot was turned aside, and the weapon knocked from my hand to the ground.

Then ensued a fearful struggle between us, in which we both were precipitated down the steps upon the gravel walk below—I uppermost.

It was, perhaps, for two minutes that I held him by the throat, dealing him blows with my disengaged hand—he having the other in his strong grasp—when, with a dexterous twist of his powerful arm, he turned me aside, and I lay prostrate upon the ground, with the vice-like grip of his strong fingers grasping me by the throat, until my eyes were starting from their sockets and every muscle became inactive.

Seizing a large stone, which lay near him, he raised it in his left hand, and was about to strike me on the head, when a sharp, loud report rang on the air. The form of the ruffian fell back—his fingers relaxed their grasp.

A form in white passed before my uncertain vision ; and then, for the space of five minutes, I was utterly unconscious.

When, at length, my mind awoke from its stupor, a form—that of Miss Pickering—was bending over me, chafing my temples, and attempting to perform what Nature had done—restore me to sensibility.

From her I learnt that she had risen from her bed, at the exit of the two ruffians from her room, and, observing my dangerous situation, had fired at Jackson, just as he was about to strike me with the stone, with my revolver, which she had picked up.

I also learnt that her scream was caused by the resolution of the murderous twain to start after and murder me—fearing that she had communicated something to me which might upset their well-laid plans.

Having securely bound the still unconscious Cooper, and treating Jackson in the same way, we waited for the dawn. Miss Pickering, meanwhile, informed me of her imprisonment, by Jackson, for over a year, and his resolve to force her to make her will, and then make away with her. Her parents having died, and left her sole heiress to great wealth, her appointed guardian, Jackson, a half-brother of her mother's, was playing for a no diminutive stake.

The next morning a farmer's cart conveyed Cooper and Jackson to the town, where they were handed to the police.

Not long afterwards Miss Blanche Pickering became Mrs. Avery.

The will and revolver are still in our possession—the sole mementoes of that exciting night, when I almost lost my life, and gained a bride.

**D. Harrison.**

## A Wonderful Journey.

Count Vay de Vaya may justly claim to be the most widely-travelled man in the world. He has visited, literally, every country on earth, and speaks no fewer than seven languages. He recently accomplished the remarkable feat of penetrating, on a mission connected with charitable and religious institutions, through the wilds of Siberia, from the Near East of Russia to the mysterious and romantic Far East, to which the eyes of the whole world are now turned. At Peterhof, near St. Petersburg, Count Vay de Vaya was accorded an audience by the Tsar, and during his subsequent journeyings he received a similar honour at the hands of the Emperors of China, Korea, and Japan. To have been received by these great monarchs, certainly four of the most unapproachable of the world's sovereigns, is a wonderful record: and the Count's diary of what he saw and heard in their little-known palaces, of what they told him, and of what they asked him, is of deep and unique interest at this moment. Count Vay de Vaya's diary is published just as he wrote it at the time in *Pearson's Magazine*, his audiences with the Tsar and the Emperor and Dowager Empress of China appearing in the April number, on sale April 1. The audiences with the Emperors of Korea and Japan will appear in the May number.

Digitized by Google

## An Unkind Suggestion.

Cholly: "I was thrown out of a carriage the other day, and would have been killed if I hadn't alighted on something soft." She: "Really? Did you fall head first?"

## A Different View.

Her Mother: "I think that Mabel has a slight leaning towards this young Mr. Smith." Her Father: "Slight? Great Scott! You ought to have seen them last night!"

## No Encouragement Required.

Her Father: "What! You say you're engaged to Fred? I thought I told you not to give him any encouragement?" His Daughter: "I don't. He doesn't need any."

## Cause and Effect.

Alice: "What a gallant person Mr. Dunkley is. He never addresses me without beginning 'Fair Miss.'" Dorothy: "Oh, that's force of habit. He used to be a 'bus conductor."

## He Had Just Been Accepted.

Algy: "So you've been taking Miss Haughtie out boating on the river. Rather stylish girl, but too reserved for me." Reggie: "Yes, I expect she is; I've just reserved her for life."

## Thankful for Small Mercies.

Ethel: "And so you told him what you thought of him, did you? And what did he say?" Kittie: "The horrid thing! He said he was pleased to know that I thought of him at all."

## The Only Choice She Had.

Mother: "Why did you accept Charlie from among all the young men who have paid you attention?" Daughter: "Because he was the only one that had the good taste to propose."

## Her Version.

He (bitterly): "You have no heart." She: "What nonsense!" He: "It's the truth. You flirt outrageously with every man you meet." She: "Then I must have a large heart to take in so many."

## The Retort Courteous.

His Wife: "I wish I had lots of money." He: "If one could get what one wished for, I think that I should wish for common-sense, not money." Wife: "Naturally, everybody wishes for what they haven't got."

## A Bitter Emphasis.

Vexed Wife: "There's no calamity that can befall a woman that I have not suffered!" Amiable Husband: "Wrong, my dear; now, you have never been a widow." Vexed Wife: "I said calamity, sir!"

## Absent-Minded.

Elsie: "Yes, dear, my husband is a doctor, and a lovely fellow, but awfully absent-minded." Ada: "Indeed?" Elsie: "Only fancy! During the marriage ceremony, when he gave me the ring, he felt my pulse and told me to put out my tongue."

## Extremely Wonderful.

Editor (gazing on his *fiancée's* picture): "That girl is a poem." Poet (curiously): "And still you do not reject her?"

## A Surprising Fact.

"Did you call on Miss Jonas?" "Yes. She was awfully disagreeable, too; didn't cheer up, really, until I started to leave."

## Should Try Again.

He (desperately): "Then I am to give up all hope, am I?" She (consolingly): "Not of necessity. There are lots of girls about still, you know."

## She Was Bored.

She: "Don't you play, Mr. Staylate?" He: "No; but I am thinking of taking lessons. I have a good ear for time, don't you know." She: "Indeed! Was it eleven or twelve o'clock that just now struck?"

## The Last Straw.

He (bitterly): "If I were rich you'd marry me readily enough!" She: "Don't, Gussie, don't! Such devotion breaks my heart!" He: "What do you mean?" She: "Often have you praised my beauty, but never before my common-sense!"

## A Shrewd Wife.

Mrs. Greene: "I hope you trust your husband implicitly?" Mrs. Brown: "Oh, yes, indeed! But I wouldn't have him know it for the world. If he were aware how absolutely I trust him he might be tempted to take advantage of it, you know."

## Spoken in Haste.

Daughter: "Should I give Mr. Cash an immediate answer to his proposal, mamma? He has only known me four months, you know!" Mother (anxiously): "Goodness gracious, yes, child! When he's known you longer he might want to back out of it!"

## Breaking it Gently.

Fred: "I've news for you, cousin Mabel! Daisy Green is engaged to be married!" Mabel: "Heavens, Fred! That red-nosed little spitfire! Whoever could want to marry her? Surely the poor fellow isn't here to-night?" Fred: "Yes, he's here, dear—*I'm he!*"

## Matrimonial Bliss.

"Marriage," acridly said the Grizzled Bachelor, with a grin as pessimistic and mirthless as that of a laughing hyena, "is always a disappointment—to the fellows who don't get the girl, and to the girls who don't get the fellow; also to the girl who does get him, and to the fellow who gets her."

## That Awful Child Again.

Willie: "Where did the hen bite you, Mr. Jones? I don't see any of the marks." Mr. Jones: "Why, Willie, I haven't been bitten by any hen." Willie: "Mamma, didn't you tell papa Mr. Jones was dreadfully henpecked? Why, mamma, how funny you look! Your face is all red."

## Sour Grapes.

Robson: "Where are you going to?" Remsen: "Up to ask my pretty cousin to marry me." Robson: "Well, good luck to you." Remsen: "Thanks, old chap." Robson (an hour later): "Well, did your pretty cousin say yes?" Remsen: "No; the plain-looking hussy refused me."

## Her Objection.

Miss Askew: "So your marriage is put off?" Miss Crummy: "Yes, papa is not at all satisfied with his position; mamma doesn't like his family connections, auntie thinks he is too careless in his dress, and I think——" Miss Askew: "Yes, what do you think?" Miss Crummy: "I think I ought to wait till he asks me."

Digitized by Google

*Concludes in This Number.*

# DUPES OF DESTINY.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

## FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER.
### The Lifting of the Shadows.

"Where is he?"

"They carried 'im into the lodge keeper's at the Court, sir. They got a doctor at once, but 'e's still unconscious, they say."

The ex-millionaire wiped his brow with a trembling hand. Then he was again too late! He had arrived with the two detectives and the weak, delicate wife of Edward Day, and they had stopped in the village to make some inquiries, while he had gone as quickly as he could to find news of Philip. It was too far to go to Danger Point and look for him. Had he fallen into the trap laid for him, what was to have happened would have taken place the day before. Oh! fool that he had been not to have gone immediately on receipt of the telegram that poor girl had contrived to send by someone. Now he had arrived to learn that the night before a man dying of wounds was brought down from Danger Point, and when he had asked the name, he had been told that it was the "young gentleman who was once often seen about at the Court," and his heart told him that it was Philip—Philip, the son of his youth, who was bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, who lay dying.

At the door of the lodge he hesitated. "I—I—want—to see him!" he muttered to the kindly-faced woman who met him.

He walked into the tiny room and took off his hat. The room was empty, but in the inner one he heard voices.

A shadow stood on the threshold. He looked at it with dim eyes. It came towards him; then, as the full light fell upon it, he staggered and would have fallen had not the shadow flung out a strong hand and supported him.

"Why, Mr. Johnson! What wonderful stroke of Fate brings you here! There's nothing wrong, I hope, with Marcella?" and Philip Nullius gazed anxiously into the white drawn face of the man who seemed to have suddenly aged.

"No—no!" and Caleb J. Johnson drew a long, quivering breath. "All is well. She is safe with—with Lady Violet. But you, Philip," he went on, using the young man's name unconsciously, "you are safe and unhurt! How is it? They told me you were dying, and I hurried here."

"It was good of you, sir," Philip answered gravely. "I am not in the least hurt—though I was in danger once. It is not I who am dying, but—Edward Day!"

"Ah! tell me?" the ex-financier cried harshly. "Did he make an attempt upon your life, then? And did you instead nearly kill him, Philip?" and he laughed cruelly.

"He did make an effort to fight me, sir," Philip said gravely, "but he fell and struck his head. I left him to go and find someone to help me, and when I returned I found him stabbed, with a dagger left in his side."

"Dying! and soon he will be dead! So have his sins found him out—the young liar, thief, would-be-murderer and forger that he was!" Mr. Johnson's voice shook with the hate that seized him.

"Hush!" Philip said sharply. "Don't revile the dying, sir; besides—there is another reason"—his voice trembled—"I cannot stand by and hear him abused now."

"Why, not? He bore you no love."

"No," was the sad reply, "but I have just discovered that he is my twin-brother."

"What!" the ex-millionaire shouted, "your—twin—brother? Oh, Heaven!—if this be true—if this be true—then I am indeed paid back by Destiny!"

Philip looked at him wonderingly, and, as he looked, the perspiration broke out in beads upon his brow. The wild words and distraught manner of the one-time financier pointed to a strange conclusion, and it was one that almost bewildered him in its weird possibilities. Who was this man with the quivering face and haggard eyes, that he should ask such strange questions?

"What do you mean, sir?" he said sharply. "Do you know the secret that has baffled me for so long—the secret of my birth?"

Mr. Johnson raised his face from his hands where he had hidden it.

"Yes, lad—I know it! I am not Caleb J. Johnson, but Caleb Jerningham—your father, and also father of the unfortunate boy lying in that room. It is a long story, lad; don't blame me now—my punishment is great! I have only known of this a short time."

There was a silence, then a hand was laid on the older man's shoulder. "Come, let us go into him—before he dies."

And by the death-bed of the weak, erring son of that once loved girl-bride, Caleb Jerningham drained the dregs of the cup of bitterness. He had fought with his own son, and that son had brought him down in name and position, robbed and betrayed his father. It had been a battle of blood against blood, brain against cunning, and cunning had prevailed—to what purpose?

"That is the dagger we found in him," Philip whispered

He looked at it, and his mind leapt the space of years. He saw a couple of hearty miners on a gold claim in Australia; one presented his friend with a quaint dagger of Eastern pattern as a memento of troublous times. And that friend's name had been Rayne! He shivered. Rayne had worshipped Helen in those days, and now—now he had done her son to death!

Almost as though the dying man read his thoughts, Edward Day murmured faintly:

"Confound you, Rayne! You have won the last trick! I did all the others fairly well; but you—have scored, Rayne!" His eyes flickered and caught the tender glance of Philip bending over him, and for an instant he paused. "I'm sorry!" he whispered. "It is the only thing for which I have regret. Forgive!"

Philip turned to the ex-financier. "Will you tell him—now?"

He shook his head. "It would only embitter the end for him. I must bear it alone. He did me grievous wrong. I forgive him now."

Then, over the dead body of the sinful man, the two men gazed at each other. Father and son; and between them lay another of their blood—a man who had wronged them both.

Philip reached out his hand; his eyes gleamed through a mist. "Father!"

"Son!"

And across the dead the hands of the living met in a clasp of fellowship and understanding.

At the door of the cottage they came face to face with the two women most dear to them. They were Lady Violet and Marcella, who flew with a cry into her lover's arms.

"We could not stay behind," Lady Violet said. "My darling and I were anxious; but tell us what has happened? Why are you and Mr. Nullius both together, and looking so grave?"

"Come in here," the financier said; drawing her back into the room. "We all have much to explain, and now is the best time for shadows to be lifted. Come, Philip, my son—come, Marcella."

Digitized by Google

# YOUR HEALTH

**IS THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.**

**Kill Infection instantly by means of**

# NUBOLIC SOAP

*For Clothes, Bedding, Floors, Furniture, Paint, Oilcloth, Drains, &c.*
*In the Bathroom, Nursery, Cellar, and Kitchen.* *For Plates, Pots, Pans, &c.*

**SAVE HEALTH. SAVE LIFE. SAVE WRAPPERS.**

Sold Everywhere by Grocers, Oilmen, Stores, &c.

## ANOTHER GREAT PRIZE SCHEME

**120,419 Prizes**

FOR SOAP WRAPPERS. **Cash Prizes** as high as **£100 each.** Thousands of WATCHES, CYCLES, SEWING MACHINES, TIMEPIECES, DRESS LENGTHS, and other Articles. N.B.—Collect the Wrappers and send them to the address below. **£25,969 worth of valuable Prizes,** some in money, some in the shape of beautiful costly and useful articles to be distributed amongst users of **NUBOLIC SOAP.** Wrappers of **WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER** and **SPARKLA** may be used by competitors for the prizes. Full particulars with each tablet of the three soaps.

**Value £25,969**

**JOSEPH WATSON & SONS Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, LEEDS.**

If you wish to **EAT WELL**
— TAKE —

# BEECHAM'S PILLS.

**You will EAT WELL,**

because by their specific action on the digestive organs **Beecham's Pills** remove the sensation of fulness and oppression commonly experienced, give the appetite "edge," and restore the stomach to healthy and natural function.

*Sold everywhere in Boxes price 1s. 1½d. (56 pills) and 2s. 9d. (168 pills).*

"**NO BETTER FOOD.**"

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

# Fry's

**Pure Concentrated**

# Cocoa.

**300 GOLD MEDALS, ETC.**

*The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET," "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and "MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its*

**ABSOLUTE PURITY.**

**IMPORTANT CAUTION.**—Sold only in tins with gilt top.


Digitized by Google

## FIFTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.
### In the King's Name!

"So you have betrayed me, have you? Thus is your promise to be bought, is it? You think to have scored off me—to have given me away! But you have reckoned without your host, my dear Major Dick!" and Sir Cyprian laughed quietly, yet with a thrill of triumph in his voice that made the man with him wince uneasily. His eyes followed those of the baronet, and saw through the window an unpretentious-looking trap come slowly up the drive. There was nothing out of the way about it, but his lips parted in a slow smile of satisfaction as he turned to the man whom he had betrayed.

"You see, Rust, they think you will take some catching. You are no ordinary criminal; but you must cave in now—oh, Great Chief!" he laughed recklessly.

The lines round the baronet's mouth grew deeper, and his eyes sparkled as he said softly:

"And you have sold me for a price, my dear Major. Turned King's evidence, eh? Well, it's a pity; but I don't think you will live to enjoy the proceeds of your treachery!"

"What do you mean?" burst from the other man hastily.

Sir Cyprian slipped his hand in his pocket. "That the law of all traitors to a cause is that they must die. It is a penalty they must pay."

The other rose and stumbled to the door. He had not considered that his own safety was in danger. It had escaped him for the nonce that the man he had betrayed would die hard, and not without an attempt to wipe out the score.

"Don't trouble!" laughed the sneering voice; "the key is in my pocket—that way of escape is closed, there is only one thing left to you now."

The craven coward, sodden with drink and dazed with terror, fell on his knees before the door. "For pity's sake, Rust, let me go! I—I can't die!"

"No? That's a pity, because it is the only thing left to such a worm as yourself!" Then his rage flashed forth. "You won't have the pleasure of seeing me in the hands of the police. The 'Spade' will play the trump card yet."

Then with a swift movement he drew his hand from his pocket. There was a report—a flash of smoke, and then—silence. The man who had been kneeling near the door fell over limply, and from his temple oozed a small stream of red.

"Open! In the King's name!" cried a loud, commanding voice outside the door, and there was a sound of tramping feet.

Sir Cyprian replaced the weapon in his pocket and smiled; then touching a panel in the wall, he disappeared, just as the door was broken open, and a crowd of men tumbled into the room. As they saw the bundle on the floor they recoiled.

"Suicide! Too late!"

"No!" cried another voice—that of Caleb Jerningham—"not suicide—murder!" They turned the body over, and as the ex-financier's eyes fell on the upturned face, he exclaimed in amazement.

"This is Flash Dick—the informer," the detective said. "I see he's got his deserts!"

And Caleb Jerningham realised, with a throb of gratitude, that the woman he had wronged by marrying was indeed free to be his wife again; for the man with the dead, unsightly face was the erstwhile dashing cavalry officer, Major Richard Frayne-Lennox—once the husband of Lady Violet, and the father of innocent Marcella!

"Thank God he is dead!" he murmured, as he turned away. "Marcella shall never know."

Sir Cyprian Rust sat in a chair in the room at the end of the secret wing. It was the room where he had for years kept his mad wife a prisoner, while defrauding the insurance people of twenty thousand pounds. He sat with his face to the light, a mocking smile still resting on the cynical mouth, at having cheated the law, even at the eleventh hour. In the midst of the beautiful curios and jewels for which he had so successfully devoted his evil genius in obtaining, they found him, true to the end to his fatal love of sin and crime, surrounded by the objects of his unprincipled passion. His left hand hung over the side of the chair, and from it a pool of blood ebbed slowly. With his usual love of neatness and precision the baronet had severed the main artery, and so facing the famous picture that was stolen from the one-time millionaire, he died, his fingers clutching the "Sign of the Spade," the "Society" over which he had so long reigned as an unworthy monarch. At a higher tribunal he was answering for his sins, while the law, clamouring for admittance, cried: "In the name of the King!"

* * * * *

A beautiful summer day; on the lawn at the Court a garden-party was in full swing.

"It seems like the days of your grandfather back again, Sir Philip," said an old Army veteran to the tall, manly young Squire; "and your wife, too, reminds me of her aunt. How the old chap would have rejoiced to see his grandson back in the old place—dear, dear! All's well that ends well!"

Sir Philip Jerningham agreed, and his eyes met those of the gracious young chatelaine of the Court, in a glance of love and understanding.

All was well indeed with them, and the present compensated for the horrors of the past year, when they had fought against such fearful odds. The news of Sir Cyprian's suicide had been followed by the amazing news that a will, made on the death-bed of the late Sir Basil Wingate, leaving everything unconditionally to the children of his daughter, had she any, was found in a secret drawer in Sir Cyprian's study; then came another thunderbolt from Mr. Caleb J. Johnson, who, taking his own name of Jerningham, revealed himself as the husband of the late Sir Basil's daughter and father of Philip Nullius—the new baronet.

The past was hushed and forgotten in the events that quickly followed.

"Dearest love," Sir Philip whispered to his wife, "how lovely you look, my darling, and how I love to see you happy, little wife."

Her fingers caught his for an instant.

"I am almost too happy, beloved; but there is another couple running us very close. See!" she laughed softly, "my dear mother and your father, Philip. And Aunt Laura, Sir Cyprian's wife, how happy she is now that she has regained her reason and is living so comfortably with us. It's like a fairy tale for us all to be so united after the fearful misunderstandings of the past!"

He smiled. "Yes, it is a wonderful fairy tale, beloved, and we must never let it come to an end. Dear little Lottie seems happier, too. Your mater has already a match-making idea fermenting in her brain, I notice. See how she artfully contrives to leave her with young Halebury!"

Marcella laughed softly. "Yes—dear, loyal, little Lottie will change her name by-and-bye, that is evident. She will forget soon, I hope." Then, turning to her husband, she murmured: "Oh, Philip, how grateful I am to God for having guided us through so much trouble, and brought us into such a beautiful haven of happiness—such 'dupes of destiny,' as we all were."

"Yes, darling!" he answered. "And now 'children in Fairyland'!"

THE END.

---

## ABOUT OUR NEW SERIAL.

You have now finished reading "Dupes of Destiny." Now turn at once to the first pages of this number and begin our splendid new serial. The first instalment is a fine long one, and if you read it there is no doubt that you will want to read all the succeeding ones. Arnold Bennett, the author of "Phantom Shadows," is an exceptionally clever writer, and this is one of his very best stories.

Google

# A Good Cycle

At a FAIR price is cheaper than a poor Cycle at ANY price. Buy the best and avoid risks.
"CENTAURS," "COVENTRY CHALLENGE," "HUMBERS," "PREMIERS," "ROVERS," "SWIFTS," "SINGERS," &c.
Their names guarantee their quality.

FROM **8/-** MONTHLY.

A HIGH-GRADE COVENTRY CYCLE FOR £6
On approval. Two Years' Warranty.
Write for Lists (Free).
EDWARD O'BRIEN Ltd. (Dept. S3),
World's Largest Cycle Dealers, COVENTRY.

# FREE TO YOU.

To advertise S.L.S. Records we are giving away our noted Phonographs for a limited time. Absolutely not a penny to pay for one. Write, giving full address and nearest railway station; enclose stamp. Mention this paper.
SYMONDS' LONDON STORES, 124-128 CITY ROAD, LONDON.

# REAL DEVONSHIRE CREAM
(CLOTTED).

Absolutely pure; no preservatives used; the most efficacious substitute for cod liver oil, invaluable for children and invalids; ½lb. 1/4; 1lb. 2/4; 2lbs. 4/4, free; supplied constantly to the Countesses Cadogan, Pembroke, Sefton, Dundonald, Guilford, Lichfield, etc., by Mrs. CONYERS, Chagford, R.S.O., Devon.

# JUNO CYCLES

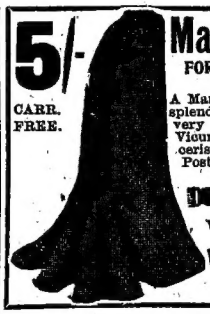
ARE THE VERY BEST.
FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN.
Complete with All Fittings and Carriage Paid.

Rustless Roman Rims & Hubs.

CASH OR 12 MONTHLY PAYMENTS of
£8 0 0 „ 15/- ea.
8 8 0 „ 15/10 „
9 0 0 „ 16/8 „
9 10 0 „ 17/6 „
JUNO Motor Cycles, 3 H.P., £34, or Monthly Payments.

JUNO Two-Speed Gear Cycles, £12 12s., or 12 Payments of 23/4 each. Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories; over 130 pages and Hundreds of Illustrations, sent post free.
Metropolitan Machinists' Co. Ld., S.S. Dept., 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London E.C.; and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

# 5/- Marvellous Offer
FOR A SHORT TIME ONLY.



CARR. FREE.

A Manufacturer's Stock of these splendid Tailor-Made Skirts, very latest design, in Black Vicuna Cloth, Strapped Mercerised Silkette. Send at once Postal Order for
**5/-**
With length of front and waist measurement to
WIGAN SKIRT CO.
WIGAN.
Est. 1885

# TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Allowed on every cycle bought of us. Your Money with carriage charges refunded without question if not perfectly satisfactory.
Highest grade fully warranted
BRITISH MADE CYCLES
LATEST MODELS £2-10 to £6
New Departure Free Wheel and Hub Brake, Best Makes Tyres, and best British-made equipment.
200 SECOND-HAND CYCLES all makes, as good as new, £1 to £2-10
Factory clearing sale at *half prices*.
EARN A CYCLE taking orders from sample machine furnished by us. Active Agents wanted in each district. Large profits easily made. Write at once for free catalogues and our *special offer*.
Tyres, Sundries, Sewing Machines, Phonos *half prices*.
MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 44E,
85-97, Paradise Street, Liverpool,
19, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.

# FREEMAN'S
TRADE MARK
THE ORIGINAL & ONLY TRUE
# CHLORODYNE
Best Remedy for Coughs, Colds, Asthma, Bronchitis, etc.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 6s., or postage free by the INVENTOR, R. FREEMAN, 70 KENNINGTON PARK ROAD, LONDON, S.E.

RECOMMENDED BY MEDICAL MEN.

N.B.—Lord Chancellor Selborne, Lord Justices James and Mellish, decided in favour of Freeman's Original Chlorodyne, and against Browne & Davenport, compelling them to pay all costs.
—"Times," 24-7-73.

# BORAX DRY SOAP

For quick and easy washing, white—sweet clothes—and bright—healthy homes.
Use it in your Spring Clean.
Sold in ¼-lb. packets everywhere.
*By Special Appointment. Makers to the King.*
The Patent Borax Co. Ld.
Birmingham.
WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE, &c.

BORAX STARCH GLAZE
IMPROVES ALL STARCH.

An admirable Food of the

# EPPS'S

Finest quality and flavour.

# COCOA

Nutritious and Economical.

From 6/- Monthly. Special Offer. 500 New Cycles £3 10s. 500 Genuine B.S.A. £6 10s. Sample Victory Motor Cycle £26. Sent carr. paid before payment. *Agents Wanted*
Dereham Rd. Cycle Co., Norwich

# VARICOSE VEINS.

Bad Legs, etc., are completely Cured with inexpensive home treatment. It absolutely removes the pain, swelling, tiredness, and disease. Full Particulars on receipt of two stamps. S. S. Roberts, 45 Henley Road, Southsea.

# GIVEN AWAY
with next week's
# HOME NOTES
(No. 534)

A PAPER PATTERN of this
## Spring Coat.

*Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.*
PRICE ONE PENNY.

*You Can Dress Better and Save Money By using*
# MAYPOLE SOAP

Colours 4d. per cake — WHICH — Black 6d. per cake
DYES ANY COLOUR
BRILLIANT—DURABLE—FAST—ECONOMICAL.
*Curtains, Blouses, Frocks, Silks, and Satins made to look like new.*
NO MESS—NO TROUBLE.
*Send for Free Booklet "THE PERFECTION OF HOME DYEING" to the Maypole Co., 17 Cumming Street, London, N.*


Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

*[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.*]*

### *Mammon versus Love.*

"IRIS" writes: "My family is very poor, but quite recently a rich aunt took a fancy to me, and desired me to live with her. She is a widow with no children, and my parents were naturally delighted with the opportunity, and, of course, I was equally pleased. But there is one circumstance which mars my joy. At home, I kept company with a young man who is a clerk, hard-working and desirable in every way except in worldly means. My family had no objection to him at the time, but since I am with my aunt all is changed. She and they absolutely forbid my having anything to do with him, merely because of his social position. I love him very dearly, and he tells me that he hopes to be considerably advanced in position and able to marry me shortly. My aunt is very determined, and would cast me off if I disobeyed her, and that would mean many disadvantages for myself and my family."

* * * * *

You must decide whether the young man on the one hand, or your own wealth and prosperity and the welfare of your family on the other, is dearer to you. Some girls would give up everything for love, others would think twice before surrendering worldly wealth. Your own nature must decide. There is only one compromise. Don't pledge yourself to the young man, but just wait until he has attained the prosperous condition he speaks of. Persuade your aunt, if possible very tactfully, that he is quite a desirable young man and effect an introduction. She may take a fancy to him, too, and then everything would be right. But between now and then I should advise you to appear to be obeying your aunt.

### *Tittle-Tattle.*

"A. S. R." is in an awkward position. She is engaged to a man some years older than herself, of whom she is most fond. However, since her engagement is announced she has been hearing all sorts of whispering about the man. There are rumours that he was concerned in some scandal a good many years ago, of which "A. S. R." knew nothing when accepting his proposal. Should she take any steps in the matter, as her friends are talking a great deal, and one of them advised "A. S. R." to break off the match?

* * * * *

If at the time of his proposal you knew nothing to the detriment of your *fiancé*, then the scandal with which he is said to have been connected cannot have been a very serious one. If you really love him, you will be fully prepared to withstand the talk of tattlers. Even if their stories are true, quite possibly the incident has long been forgotten, and is not one which is really much against the man. I imagine the rumours are simply exaggerations, set about to make mischief by people who are either malicious or jealous. You should show your character by absolutely ignoring them. No doubt your *fiancé* will explain everything in good time, and you should wait until then.

### *The Way to Meet Girls.*

"WHAT is a man to do who has no opportunity for getting to know girls?" asks "WORRIED," who finds himself in that position. "I have found it so difficult," he adds, "that I almost despair of ever getting to know them?"

* * * * *

I cannot quite understand a man who is in this position. The ways of getting to know girls are numerous. If a man has sisters, for instance, he should be able to meet their girl friends. If he has no sisters, then he must have male friends, who have sisters, whom he should be able to meet. Failing either of these, a young man can often meet the right sort of girl in connection with his place of worship. He could join a tennis-club, or a dramatic society, or a musical club. Dances, and At Homes are the certain result of his belonging to such bodies. The man who, like "WORRIED," finds himself out of touch with the fair sex, has, I think only himself to blame. By a very little effort he should be able to meet a sufficient number of the opposite sex from which to select a possible sweetheart.

### *A Rival Stepmother.*

A tale of a serious love affair comes from "DELICE." "I am twenty and about to become engaged. But my domestic relations are very strained, owing to the fact that my young stepmother—aged twenty-nine, the widow of my deceased father—wishes to marry the man I love. She is still pretty, young, and smart, and makes her love for him very evident. He is flattered by it, and puts down whatever I may say about her to jealousy. He does not exactly encourage her, but finds it difficult to repulse her. She uses every possible means to influence my lover in her favour and against me. She is malicious and ill-natured, and always refers to her own perfections and to my faults. I just hate her, and am sorely afraid she will do me mischief with my lover."

* * * * *

Why, "DELICE," need you meet him at the same house as that in which your stepmother lives? Could you not so arrange it that he did not visit you there? Evidently, she is more experienced than yourself, and far cleverer in making herself attractive to a man, or she would never have caused the havoc she has. You should candidly ask the young man which of the two he loves. If he confesses that it is yourself, then implore him not to see your stepmother any more, and arrange your meetings elsewhere. It would be quite hopeless to expect a settlement so long as this pitched battle continues.

### *A Bumptious Sweetheart.*

"MY sweetheart," writes "A. M.", "has got into a way lately of bragging about himself, trying to make himself look bigger and more important than he really is. I am very fond of him, and he of me, but it makes it unpleasant when we are with friends, and makes him look very small. What could I do to break him of this habit? He is just reaching his twentieth birthday."

* * * * *

I should not be alarmed. The approach of one's twentieth birthday has often the effect of swelled head on young men, who are just beginning to realise that they are growing important. In a very short time your sweetheart will discover that his importance is of a very limited order, especially if you continue to treat him just as before, and always squash him whenever he indulges in this bragging habit. Don't on any account treat it seriously. The complaint from which he suffers rarely lasts long at that age. If it should seize him five or more years later, it would be much worse.

Cynthia.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

# All Players of Football,
# All Lovers of Football,
# ATTEND!

**Among its extraordinarily varied and interesting contents there are three articles in**

## The APRIL . .

# Royal Magazine

**which you *dare* not miss unless you wish to repent it all your life long, *viz.*,**

## "FOOTBALL IN DIAGRAMS."

**This is something quite unique. It describes a method of reporting a game by which every movement of the ball and any player can be followed and recorded with minute exactitude from start to finish.**

**You will be able to get up these interesting diagrams yourself without any difficulty.**

## "THE GENTLE ART OF GOAL-GETTING"

**is the other article which you positively cannot afford to miss if you wish to become proficient in the game. It contains many useful tips from the leading exponents of football.**

## *DON'T FORGET* . .

# 4D. THE ROYAL MAGAZINE 4D.

**Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.**


Digitized by Google

# FENDERS AND BEDSTEADS

of Every Description
Direct from Works.

Also CURBS, FIRE IRONS, BRASSES, FIRE GUARDS, &c.

Send particulars of your requirements.
Sketches and Prices can be sent on at once.

SPARKHILL FENDER AND BEDSTEAD CO.,
B88 DURHAM ROAD, BIRMINGHAM.

Your Food will do you more good when salted with . .

CEREBOS Table Salt

"The pickle of pickles."

# THE MILITARY PICKLE.

A choice condiment of Oriental Fruits and English Vegetables.

HAYWARD BROS. Ltd., 319 KENNINGTON ROAD, S.E.

THE "SIRDAR" RUG-WOOL

FIRST & BEST FOR RUG & MAT MAKING
ENDLESS WEAR

BRIGHT IN FINISH! OF SUPERIOR QUALITY!
May be had in 30 Art Shades from the principal dealers. Insist on having the "SIRDAR" & TAKE NO SUBSTITUTE.

PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR RUG & MAT MAKING FREE.

WHOLESALE ONLY FROM
HARRAP BROS., BECTIVE MILLS, WAKEFIELD.

# "MENE"

A SAMPLE ½ DOZEN OF THESE FAMOUS SANITARY TOWELS

IN ASSORTED SIZES, WILL BE SENT POST FREE FOR SIX STAMPS.

NONE EQUAL THEM FOR CLEANLINESS COMFORT & ECONOMY.

SOLD BY ALL UNDERCLOTHING HOUSES AND CHEMISTS.

LADIES SHOULD WRITE for SAMPLE to MISS HAYNES, 5½ FANN ST. LONDON, E.C.

A TURKISH BATH AT HOME
BY USING THE

"IMPERIAL" FOLDING VAPOUR BATH CABINET

CLEARS THE SKIN.
Gives Health & Vigour. CURES RHEUMATISM
GOLD MEDAL, 1903.

PRICE 20/10 COMPLETE WITH STOVE

Send for full particulars to
KITCHING BROS. & Co. IMPERIAL WORKS, HULL.




Digitized by Google